EXPLORATION OF WORKER PERCEIVED WORKPLACE ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE FOR INJURED WORKERS WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN A RETURN TO WORK PROGRAM

by

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Abstract

Exploration of Worker Perceived Workplace Organizational Justice for Injured Workers who have Participated in a Return to Work Program

Recent interest in organizational justice and disability management has resulted in this thesis, the purpose of which was to examine the relationship between perceived organizational justice and return to work (RTW). Three studies were conducted to this end. First, a scoping study mapped current literature and identified gaps in the justice and RTW literature. Secondly, a phenomenological study was conducted with 12 injured workers in a RTW program to examine their “lived experience” of justice and to identify emergent themes around justice and RTW. Finally, a quantitative study was conducted with injured workers who were participating in RTW programs to determine the relationship between organizational justice, organizational support and RTW outcomes.

The scoping study identified 14 justice/RTW articles that were reflected within three themes: claims, RTW interventions and outcomes. The scoping study demonstrated that there was very little research examining justice and RTW and that it was important to continue to explore this area. The phenomenological study revealed in five major themes: consistency of treatment of injured workers; accommodation equals fair treatment; outcomes of fair treatment; intensity of injured worker response; and support and 5 subthemes related to the experience of justice. The results of the quantitative study demonstrated that justice is positively correlated with job satisfaction, affective commitment and support, while being negatively correlated with intent to withdraw. Justice had no correlation with continuance commitment or duration. Support was positively correlated with job satisfaction and affective commitment, but not correlated with continuance commitment, intent to withdraw or duration. Further hierarchical linear regression
analysis revealed that support mediates the effect of justice on job satisfaction and affective commitment. Justice accounts for ten percent of the variance in intent to withdraw.

The results of the thesis show that justice is an important psychosocial factor to consider in RTW. Consideration is also given to how the results of these studies add to both social exchange theory; a major theory within the justice literature, and the disability management literature. This thesis provides recommendations for practice and future scholarship.
Co-Authorship

The following people and institutions contributed to the work undertaken as part of this thesis and intended for submission to the Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation:

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Statement of Originality

(Required only for Division IV Ph.D.)

I hereby certify that all of the work described within this thesis is the original work of the author. Any published (or unpublished) ideas and/or techniques from the work of others are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

(Sherrey Larmour-Trode)

(November, 2015)
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List of Abbreviations

Return to Work – RTW
Workplace Safety and Insurance Board - WSIB
Perceived Organizational Justice – POJ
Social Exchange Theory - SET
Perceived Organizational Support - POS
Leader-Member Exchange - LMX
Organizational Citizenship Behavior - OCB
Chapter 1
Introduction

Workplace injuries and diseases cost Canadians more than 19 billion dollars annually factoring in both direct and indirect costs (Government of Canada Occupational Injuries and Diseases in Canada Report, 2013). Direct costs include lost earnings for workers, decreased revenue due to impact on production, claims costs, rehabilitation expenses, medical expenses and vocational rehabilitation services. Indirect costs include decreased productivity of co-workers who are often asked to assist or take over tasks for injured workers, negative staff morale, and damage to material and equipment. However, while the number of work-related claims has steadily decreased from 1996 to 2008, the cost associated with these claims has continued to rise. A recent report from the Workplace Safety and Insurance (WSIB) Ontario, Canada that assessed data trends from 2009 to 2014 showed a decrease in total overall claims, but noted an increase in the area of high impact/high cost claims (By the Numbers, WSIB Statistical Report 2014).

The studies in this thesis were undertaken just following the “great recession” which occurred between 2007 and 2009 (Kaye, 2010). The impact on workers with a disability during the recession demonstrated that job loss was much higher for injured workers than for those workers without a disability (Kaye, 2010). Although the economic impact of the great recession was not as significant in Canada compared to the United States (Hoffmann & Lemieux, 2014), it was felt in Ontario as manufacturing was negatively impacted. An examination of the impact of macroeconomics on workers found that workers who were residing in an area with high unemployment rates during the recession were more likely to see currently employed workers
reporting a disability in the next year (e.g. year 2 of the recession) (O’Brien, 2013; Livermore & Honeycutt, 2015). Furthermore, injured workers were found to be concentrated in blue collar and goods-producing jobs with longer unemployment durations, lower wages and higher rates of part-time work. Of note, once injured workers left the workforce they had a much slower return to pre-recession employment levels, and as of 2012, statistics in the United States still showed increases in unemployment of disabled workers while unemployment for workers without a disability was improving (Livermore & Honeycutt, 2015). Employers are influenced more by the economy than by legal or social obligations when determining if they will accommodate an injured worker (Seing, MacEachen, Ekberg, & Stahl, 2015) leaving workers with a disability at risk of layoff due to an unwillingness to provide suitable work during a recession or slowdown.

Legislation affecting workers in Ontario, Canada is designed to clearly define the rules and supports related to worker disability and RTW (WSIB Annual Report 2014). The legislation focuses on minimizing injury and improving RTW outcomes, which ultimately reduces the cost of injuries to both workers and employers. Ontario has several key pieces of legislation to address injury and return to work including the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (WSIA) and the Human Rights Code of Ontario. These pieces of legislation provide a structure through which injured or ill workers are provided with a mechanism to refuse unsafe work, are provided financial support, treatment and RTW assistance. Additional legislation including the Statutory Accident Benefits Schedule (SABS) under the Insurance Act of Ontario (IAO) deals with individuals injured as a result of a motor vehicle accident (MVA). The benefits outlined in the SABS detail the supports available to injured workers with respect to treatment and return to work. One of the primary goals of all pieces of relevant legislation affecting injured workers is that of early and safe return to work. Early and
safe return to work is one of the foundational pieces of a disability management program
designed to manage injury, decrease claims costs and increase return to work outcomes (Shrey,
1996; Franche, Cullen, Clarke, Irvin, Sinclair, Frank, & The Institute for Work & Health, 2005).

**Decreasing Claims Costs through Disability Management Programs**

As disability costs continue to impact employers they look to control costs and improve
RTW outcomes through the development of disability management programs (Shrey & Hursh,
1999). Disability management is defined as an active process of minimizing the impact of
impairment (from injury, illness or disease) on a worker’s capacity to RTW (Shrey, 1996). There
are three basic principles of disability management: it is proactive; has labor-management
collaboration; and promotes disability prevention strategies, rehabilitation treatment and safe
RTW programs to control personal and economic costs of workplace injury and disability.
Franche et al. (2005) conducted a systematic review of quantitative disability management/RTW
literature and identified five workplace-based interventions (early contact with your supervisor,
an offer of accommodation, ergonomic visits, a dedicated RTW coordinator and healthcare
provider contact, with the employer) that were found to reduce duration and costs of disability.
Further research studies examined the cost-effectiveness of disability management programs and
found that they demonstrated an ability to both manage costs and improve return to work (RTW)
outcomes (Franche et al., 2005; Tompa, de Oliveira, & Dolinschi, 2008; Laisne, Lecompte,
Corbiere, 2012).

Understanding the complex set of factors that affect work disability and RTW has led to
the development and use of a bio-psychosocial paradigm within disability management models.
A bio-psychosocial approach is defined as a consequence of the interaction of biological,
psychosocial, environmental and ergonomic factors within a systems approach (Schultz, Stowell, Feurnstein, & Gatchel, 2007, Laisne et al., 2012).

MacEachen, Clarke, Franche, & Irwin (2006) conducted a systematic qualitative study and found three major findings related to psychosocial factors and improved RTW outcomes. The first is that RTW extends beyond the physical function to the complexities related to beliefs, roles and perceptions of many players or stakeholders. Secondly, goodwill and trust were seen as overarching conditions central to a successful RTW. Goodwill while not a tangible finding is important to RTW as it can enhance creativity around options for RTW or accommodations and promote teamwork. Thirdly, the role of supervisors in supporting RTW interventions is important as they manage the day to day social relationships with the injured worker and co-workers and oversee accommodations. Supervisors are the communication link between the injured worker and management often providing information around RTW policies and procedures to workers (MacEachen et al., 2006). Other psychosocial factors including job satisfaction, decision-making, job control, skill discretion, physical and psychological demands, social support and respect have emerged as impacting RTW outcomes (Krause, Dasinger, Deegan, Rudolph, & Brand, 2001; Krause & Lund, 2004; Huang, Shaw, & Chen, 2006).

Psychosocial factors offer a practical implication for companies with Huang et al. (2006) suggesting that companies who strive to treat workers fairly and who provide positive responses or support may find that they receive benefits through decreased disability and improved organizational output. If fair treatment of workers is a psychosocial factor that may benefit employers through decreased disability costs it would seem to be worth further investigation. Therefore the examination of organizational justice literature may provide information around an injured worker’s attitudes and behaviors towards their organization and RTW
Organizational Justice

Fairness and respect are recognized as synonymous with organizational justice (OJ) in the organizational research literature (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). Justice is socially constructed where an act is defined as just if most of the workers perceive it to be so, on the basis of empirical research (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke (2001) stated that justice is aligned with a basic respect of the human worker.

Organizational justice consists of 4 individual constructs with a potential fifth dimension representing a global justice factor – perceptions of organizational justice (POJ). Hereafter in this thesis organizational justice refers to POJ and is considered to reference the four individual justice dimensions: distributive, procedural, interpersonal and informational. Distributive justice refers to the fairness of the ratio between ones contribution to ones outcomes in comparison to others in the organization. This can include outcomes such as what an individual receives in terms of salary, benefits, rewards and satisfaction (Adams, 1965; Leventhal, 1976). Procedural justice reflects the perceived fairness of decision making processes and the degree to which they are consistent, accurate, unbiased and open to voice and input (Thibault & Walker, 1975; Leventhal, 1980). The third dimension of justice was introduced as interactional justice by Bies & Moag (1986). Interactional justice refers to the personal relationship between the individual and the person representing the organization. Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng (2001) further defined interactional justice to include two factors: informational and interpersonal or relational justice. Informational justice identifies the presence or absence of explanations from managerial authority on new procedures. Interpersonal or relational justice identifies the degree of dignity and respect the worker receives from managerial authority.
Organizational justice has been well studied over the past five decades and the research links justice to numerous outcomes including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to withdraw or leave an organization/job (Colquitt et al., 2001; Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Rai, 2013; Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, & Conlon, 2013) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Colquitt et al., 2013). Job satisfaction refers to the fact that the worker enjoys their job, while organizational commitment refers to the desire on the part of a worker to remain with their organization (Allen & Mayer, 1990). The intent to withdraw refers to the worker’s thoughts and desires to leave the organization (Colquitt et al., 2001). OCB refers to actions that support the psychological environment in which work occurs (Colquitt et al., 2013). Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to the degree to which an organization is perceived to value a worker’s contributions and well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Leader-member exchange (LMX) refers to the degree of quality of the dyadic relationship between the supervisor and worker (Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975). Both POS and LMX are mediators of POJ with outcomes such as job satisfaction, OCB, intent to withdraw and organizational commitment (affective commitment) (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Loi, Hang-yue, & dan Foley, 2006; Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; Colquitt et al., 2013; Silva & Caetano, 2013; Park, Sturman, Vanderpool, & Chan, 2015). POJ mediated by LMX suggests that the relationship between leaders/supervisors and workers is very important to worker outcomes (Dulebohn et al., 2012). POJ mediated by POS suggests that the relationship between the organization and worker is important to worker outcomes such as affective commitment, job satisfaction and intent to withdraw (El Akremi, Vandenberghe, & Camerman, 2010; Silva & Caetano, 2013).
Social Exchange Theory and Organizational Justice

Social exchange theory (SET) is the leading theory within the field of study of OJ, providing a lens through which to view the employer–worker relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). SET is defined as a series of interdependent interactions which use rules and norms of exchange to generate high-quality relationships (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The nature and quality of the relationship is defined by actions between the employer (organization and supervisor) and worker. Relationships evolve over time based on reciprocal actions between the parties. The norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), based on the folk belief that people get what they deserve, is the best studied norm related to social exchange however, there are other norms that have been identified including rationality, altruism, group gain, status consistency and competition (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The concept of Social Exchange Relationship (SER) has received the most attention in management research and is seen as a mediator or intervening variable in the employer-worker relationship. Blau (1964) stated that there are two types of exchanges: social and economic. Economic exchanges relate to a specific time for repayment such as pay or benefits where social exchange benefits do not have a specific timeframe and are generally regarded as doing a favor for someone and that favor creates a diffuse future obligation. SER creates an enduring relationship based on trust, gratitude and personal obligations. The relationship created is more than a set of rules for negotiating or transacting benefits but an interpersonal attachment between two parties such as an organization and worker or more recently between a supervisor and worker.

SET has emerged over the past decade as the dominant lens through which justice effects are explained (Colquitt et al., 2013). It can be seen as a paradigm describing how multiple
resources are exchanged following certain rules, resulting in high-quality relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). POJ predicts reciprocal actions by fostering the SER over time. The SER is multifocal (organization, supervisor) where actions taken over time by the organization/supervisor create a diffuse set of future obligations to the worker. The exchanges influence a worker’s POJ. POJ subsequently influences the worker’s level of trust, commitment, LMX and POS and predicts outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover or retaliatory behaviors (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; El Akremi et al., 2010; Silva & Caetano, 2013).

**Justice and RTW**

Justice, or a worker’s perceptions of fairness, is a psychosocial factor that can provide additional information around the complex, multifaceted investigation into what improves RTW outcomes and ultimately decreases claims costs. POJ defined by the quality of the social exchange relationship between the organization/supervisor and worker can add to how we understand the nature and quality of the employer-worker relationship and what that means when a worker is injured and involved in the RTW process. The nature of the SER would create a sense of obligation between the employer and worker that influences the worker’s POJ. The worker’s POJ will affect their level of trust, and the relationship between the parties. This sets up expectations that the worker will be treated either fairly or unfairly throughout the RTW process. So, for example, workers who have had a series of previous negative social exchanges resulting in a poor SER with the organization or supervisor would be expected to have low POJ, leading to low levels of trust, POS and LMX. The worker’s experience of unfairness or low POJ would subsequently negatively impact the RTW process through lower levels of job satisfaction,
decreased organizational commitment and an increase in retaliatory behaviors and an intention to withdraw or leave the organization.

Understanding the relationship between POJ as mediated by POS, LMX and its effect as a predictor of outcomes such as job satisfaction, affective commitment, OCB and intent to withdraw through the lens of a social exchange relationship will provide insight into how a worker’s relationship with their organization and supervisor prior to and throughout their RTW process can impact RTW outcomes. The costs of low POJ can include a worker’s decision to leave an organization or at the very least to withdraw through retaliatory behaviors such as extended sick leave, resulting in increased costs both direct and indirect.

**Methodology**

This thesis utilized a sequential transformative mixed methods approach (Cresswell, 2009). This strategy was selected based on the decision to use social exchange theory as the theoretical lens shaping the research question. This decision differentiates it from a sequential exploratory approach which may or may not include an explicit theory to inform the research process. As outlined in the sequential transformative approach, there is a focus on injured workers who represent the community of concern; exploring a problem - how they experience and/or behave in a return to work process; and a final analysis - highlighting how the results of both studies can shape and influence the injured worker’s POJ and their decisions or behaviors related to their organization/supervisor (Sweetman, Badiee, & Cresswell, 2010). There are two distinct data collection phases (see Figure 1) with both studies receiving equal emphasis and analysis. The decision was made to begin with a qualitative phenomenological study designed to provide a deeper understanding of the injured worker’s lived experience of return to work.
Themes from the first study were used to inform the second study. The quantitative study was a survey which explored the strength of the relationship between POJ and RTW outcomes including job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions. POS was introduced into the survey to determine if it is a mediator of the relationship between justice and the RTW outcomes.

**Figure 1: Sequential Transformative Mixed Method**

![Diagram of Sequential Transformative Mixed Method]

**Thesis**

Exploring an injured worker’s POJ within the context of RTW broadens the depth of the discussion on the role of psychosocial factors on RTW outcomes. The studies, which are built on understanding the nature and quality of the exchange relationship between the injured worker, their supervisor and their organization, provide a window into the complex nature of RTW. This research allows the organization to understand how and why their actions or the actions of a supervisor throughout a RTW process may result in either an injured worker who is more committed and satisfied with their work and organization or those who withdraw from the organization through either turnover or retaliation such as prolonged absenteeism or presenteeism (presenteeism is when an injured worker remaining at work when a worker is injured and unable to perform at maximum levels).

This thesis used mixed methods to address the question “What is the relationship between an injured worker’s perceptions of organizational justice, perceptions of support and outcomes
within a RTW context?” The thesis is presented in manuscript style, with three interdependent articles including a scoping study, a qualitative study and a quantitative study.

Chapter 1 presents the theoretical lens for the studies, the methodology selected, the broader research need and the research question. Chapter 2 is a literature review broadly examining the literature in the fields of organizational justice and return to work. Chapter 3 is a scoping study to answer the research question: How does the literature describe the relationship between POJ and RTW?

The next section includes two chapters, the first (chapter 4) a statement of reflexivity identifying my experiences and personal values, their impact on my understanding, biases and presuppositions of return to work and the worker’s relationship with their employer. The reflexive chapter explores the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology, including my biases, suppositions and values and establishes the basis from which the” lived experience” of injured workers was explored. The next chapter (chapter 5) is a phenomenological study that seeks to understand the lived experience of justice for 12 injured workers while they are participating in their RTW program. Chapter 6 is a quantitative study that examines the relationship between POJ, POS and RTW outcomes. The final chapter (chapter 7) integrates the results of the studies within the lens of SET, presents conclusions, practical implications of the research findings and directions for future research.
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Chapter 2
Literature Review

Introduction

Return to work and organizational justice have extensive bodies of literature that span up to five decades of research. Examination of the key areas within each of the bodies of literature will provide an understanding of the underpinnings of each field and what factors are being discussed in current research. Both bodies of literature include several systematic reviews, including qualitative and quantitative research, providing a summary of previous research and highlighting issues under current consideration. Studies included in this review are after the year 2000 and in English, with meta-analytic and systematic reviews being included to provide a comprehensive and broad overview of the research within each field.

Return to Work

Examination of RTW research identifies several key themes including: risk factors and determinants of RTW, stakeholders in RTW, workplace-based strategies and compensation or systems issues.

Risk Factors and Determinants

A meta-analysis of 32 literature reviews conducted by Nastasia, Coutu, & Tcaciuc, (2014) found that psychological and workplace factor are predictors of RTW. Psychosocial factors such as trust, job satisfaction, decision-making, job control, skill discretion, physical and psychological demands, social support, organizational support and respect have emerged as impacting RTW outcomes (Krause, Dasinger, Deegan, Rudolph, & Brand, 2001; Krause &
Lund, 2004; Huang, Shaw, & Chen, 2006; MacEachen, Clarke, Franche, & Irwin, 2006; Tjulin, MacEachen, Stiwne, & Ekberg, 2011; Nastasia et al., 2014; Pelissier, Fontana, & Chauvin, 2014; Besen, Young, & Shaw, 2015). Understanding the complex set of factors that affect work disability and RTW has led to the development and use of a bio-psychosocial paradigm within disability management models. A bio-psychosocial approach is defined as a consequence of the interaction of biological, psychosocial, environmental and ergonomic factors within a systems approach (Schultz, Stowell, Feurnstein, & Gatchel, 2007; Laisne, Lecompte, & Corbiere, 2012; Besen et al., 2015). Psychological factors including distress, depression and readiness to change influence RTW outcomes and are important to psychosocial interventions within RTW (Nastasia et al., 2014). Social relations and social factors such as trust and goodwill need to be considered by employers to improve RTW outcomes (MacEachen et al., 2006; Tjulin, A., MacEachen, & Ekberg, 2010). Besen et al. (2015) identify psychosocial factors including pain catastrophizing, fear avoidance, organizational support and RTW confidence as having an indirect relationship in improving RTW outcomes such as duration of time off work.

**Stakeholders**

To gain an understanding of the complex reality of RTW it is useful to examine the interactions between stakeholders (Shaw, Pransky, Winters, Tveito, Larson, & Roter, 2009; Nastasia et al., 2014) including the injured worker, the injury employer, supervisors, co-workers, healthcare providers such as physicians, physiotherapists and chiropractors, friends and family.

Most of the RTW research focuses on the perceptions and experiences of the injured worker with factors including recovery expectations, perceptions of disability, symptom progression and expectations of RTW, pain catastrophizing, worker confidence issues, fear
avoidance and credibility or legitimacy of the injury found to be related to RTW outcomes (Shaw et al., 2009; Nastasia et al., 2014; Toye, Seers, Allcock, Briggs, Carr, & Barker, 2015; Besen et al., 2015). Toye et al. (2015) noted that support from the organization such that work is viewed as a place to feel valued and respected is important to an injured worker and lack of support can be seen as a betrayal. MacEachen et al. (2006) also noted that a culture of goodwill within the organization is important to injured workers and to improving RTW outcomes. Workers can also experience social dislocation if they are relocated to different sites within the organization (MacEachen et al., 2006). This can result in the worker perceiving a lack of support from the organization and to feeling isolated, which can negatively impact the RTW. Injured workers who feel like a number express a sense of betrayal and a lack of understanding from their employer (Toye et al., 2015).

The role of the supervisor is a factor in RTW outcomes, as they establish the tone of the relationship between the organization (supervisor), co-workers and injured worker. The role of the supervisor in the day to day operations is crucial as they determine how disability management procedures are enacted, when and how contact is initially made with the injured worker, how they manage the potential work accommodations and they assist in dealing with co-worker perceptions and production issues (Franche et al., 2005; MacEachen et al., 2006; Tjulin et al., 2011). It is the supervisor, within the organization who is often tasked with the responsibility of RTW; establishing early contact, offering modified/accommodated work and coordinating ergonomic interventions (Franche et al., 2005). However, if they have not been provided adequate support and training from the organization (Franche et al., 2005; MacEachen et al., 2006) this could leave the supervisor struggling to manage the worker’s RTW plan and the organizations’ production needs. Supervisors with autonomy and a considerate leadership style
are more likely to offer injured worker’s work accommodation (McGuire, Kristman, Shaw, Williams-Whitt, Reguly, & Soklaredis, 2015). A considerate leadership style is one where the supervisor demonstrates concern, treats member as equals, is open to input and is seen as friendly and approachable. McGuire et al. (2015) found that Canadian and American employers who had considerate and respectful supervisors were more likely to listen to workers and be engaged in the RTW process leading to an increase in RTW outcomes such as job satisfaction.

Co-workers are important, as they can be a source of support and assistance to injured workers making the RTW smoother and more successful, or a barrier if they don’t believe that the worker is injured. Toye et al. (2015) noted that co-workers can also create a culture of skepticism and distrust, leaving the injured worker feeling guilty and betrayed. Workplace stigma where co-workers disbelieve a worker is injured can result in a hostile situation for the injured worker and negatively impact RTW outcomes.

The organization’s role is to provide a culture of goodwill, support and trust, where the worker feels valued and respected using clear policies and procedures for RTW to ensure positive RTW outcomes (MacEachen et al., 2006; Toye et al., 2015; Higgins, O’Halloran, & Porter, 2015). Economic context and internal dynamics are two aspects of the organizational environment that can impact RTW outcomes. Organizations who are in an expansion mode may be able to offer additional support to both the injured worker and supervisor improving RTW outcomes, where organizations that are struggling may put increased emphasis on the overall claim management to reduce costs and on production issues resulting in decreased support, poor administration of policies and procedures and increased distractions or disincentives to assist injured workers (MacEachen et al., 2006). Organizations in Sweden who value their workers and see them as “good workers, cooperative, responsible for themselves and having a good
attitude” were more likely to offer sick-listed workers accommodation and facilitate RTW Seing, MacEachen, Ekberg, & Stahl, 2015). Higgins et al. (2015) also noted that line managers supported by senior managers were encouraged to take a proactive stance to RTW through supporting injured workers during the RTW process.

Good, clear communication between healthcare providers, the injured worker and organization positively impact RTW outcomes (Franche et al., 2005). Healthcare providers may be in a key position to influence RTW and the use of on-site visits improves the providers’ understanding of the organization’s dynamics and the worker’s job demands potentially resulting in better RTW outcomes (Franche et al., 2005). Shaw et al. (2009) noted that focusing on the interactions between healthcare providers and the organization can improve injured worker participation in RTW.

Workplace-based Strategies

Franche et al. (2005) conducted a systematic review of quantitative disability management/RTW literature and identified five workplace-based interventions (early contact with your supervisor, an offer of accommodation, ergonomic visits, a dedicated RTW coordinator and healthcare provider contact with the employer) that were found to reduce duration and costs of disability. More recent research has supported these findings and expanded on how these interventions affect RTW outcomes (Tjuilin et al., 2011; Hoefsmit, Hourkes, & Nijhuis, 2012; Nastasia et al., 2014; Toye et al., 2015; Higgins et al., 2015).

Early contact is effective in assisting injured workers back to work (Franche et al., 2005; Hoefsmit et al., 2012). Early contact is a complex issue for many injured workers and organizations/supervisors (Tjuilin et al., 2011; Hoefsmit, 2012), even if the organization has
clear policies and procedures to address contacting the injured worker. Understanding how and when to contact the injured worker is difficult requiring the employer to balance the needs of the organization with the needs of the injured worker (Tjuilin et al., 2011). Too soon or not soon enough may result in the injured worker feeling pressured to RTW when they aren’t ready or they may feel ignored and unsupported if there is not consistent and considerate contact from the organization. Timing of the contact can affect future cooperation between the injured worker and organization (MacEachen et al., 2006). Nastasia et al. (2014) meta-analysis of 32 systematic literature reviews identified seven main workplace variables to consider or evaluate in early contact with the injured worker with a musculoskeletal injury: physical job demands, ability to modify work, job stress, workplace social support or dysfunction, expectation of resuming work and fear of re-injury. Early contact is also linked to focusing recovery at work with work now being recognized as the key place for recovery (Nastasia et al., 2014).

Offers of work accommodation from the organization have been linked to positive RTW outcomes (Franche et al., 2005; MacEachen et al., 2006; Shaw et al., 2009; Nastasia et al., 2014). Modified work need to be considered from both a social relational and physical aspect (MacEachen et al., 2006; Nastasia et al., 2014). Modified work needs to be flexible and tailored to the injured worker’s needs as well as having production value. Accommodations, such as gradual RTW has been found to be effective in managing physical complaints (Hoefsmit et al., 2012).

Ergonomic interventions have mixed results in the literature with several studies linked to positive RTW outcomes (Franche et al., 2005; Shaw et al., 2009; Nastasia et al., 2014). Franche et al. (2005) revealed findings that indicated that moderate to high intensity ergonomic content is necessary in an ergonomic visit or assessment to reduce duration of work disability. Finally,
Nevala, Pehkonen, Koskela, Ruusuvuori, & Antilla (2015) conducted a systematic review of work accommodations and found low evidence supporting the use of work aids or techniques in improving RTW outcomes.

Healthcare contact with both the injured worker and organization are linked to RTW outcomes (Hoefsmit et al., 2012). Poor communication between physicians, physiotherapists and other providers can negatively impact the RTW process and need for accommodations. Toye et al. (2015) noted that the use of sick notes by general physicians does not facilitate RTW as they generally don’t include suggestions for modified duties and don’t follow occupational recovery guidelines.

**Compensation and Systems Issues**

Relationships between compensation systems and the injured worker often leave the injured worker uncertain about the RTW process (MacEachen et al., 2006; Tjuilin et al., 2010). Nastasia et al. (2014) stated that there is a need for the organization and system to balance costs, benefits and quality. Toye et al. (2015) note that the compensation system does not facilitate RTW; with policies and procedures impacting rehabilitation decisions around RTW, leading to poor strategizing around how to assist an injured worker. Sick records are used as part of an organization’s performance review which has led workers to either not report injuries or to RTW earlier than they should either resulting in poor performance or additional sick leave (Toye et al., 2015). Further research studies examined the cost-effectiveness of disability management programs and found that they demonstrated an ability to both manage costs and improve return to work (RTW) outcomes (Franche et al., 2005; Tompa, de Oliveira, & Dolinschi, 2008; Laisne et al., 2012).
Organizational Justice

Background and Organizational Justice Factors

Fairness and respect are recognized as synonymous with organizational justice (OJ) in the organizational research literature (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). Justice is socially constructed where an act is defined as just if most of the workers perceive it to be so, on the basis of empirical research (Cropanzano & Greenberg, 1997). Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke (2001) stated that justice is aligned with a basic respect of the human worker.

Organizational justice consists of 4 individual constructs with a potential fifth dimension representing a global justice factor – perceptions of organizational justice (POJ). Hereafter in this thesis organizational justice refers to POJ and is considered to reference the four individual justice dimensions: distributive (DJ), procedural (PJ), interactional justice (IJ) consisting of interpersonal and informational justice (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). Distributive justice refers to the fairness of the ratio between ones contribution to ones outcomes in comparison to others in the organization. This can include outcomes such as what an individual receives in terms of salary, benefits, rewards and satisfaction (Adams, 1965; Leventhal, 1976). Procedural justice reflects the perceived fairness of decision making processes and the degree to which they are consistent, accurate, unbiased and open to voice and input (Thibault & Walker, 1975: Leventhal, 1980). The third dimension of justice was introduced as interactional justice by Bies & Moag (1986). Interactional justice refers to the personal relationship between the individual and the person representing the organization. Colquitt et al. (2001) further defined interactional justice to include two factors: informational and interpersonal or relational justice. Informational justice identifies the presence
or absence of explanations from managerial authority on new procedures. Interpersonal or relational justice identifies the degree of dignity and respect the worker receives from managerial authority.

Organizational justice has been well studied over the past five decades and the research themes include examination of justice outcomes including job satisfaction, organizational commitment (OC), organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB), intent to withdraw (IW) or leave an organization/job (Colquitt et al., 2001; Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; O’Hana, 2012; Rai, 2013; Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, & Conlon, 2013) and organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) (Colquitt et al., 2013; Silva & Caetano, 2013). Further research has included the role of mediators and moderators of justice and outcome variables. Mediators between organizational justice and outcomes include perceived organizational support (POS), leader-member exchange (LMX), trust and organizational commitment (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2002; Loi, Hang-yue, & dan Foley, 2006; El Akremi, Vandenberghhe, & Camerman, 2010; Colquitt et al., 2013). Moderators of organizational justice also include POS and organizational structure (Ambrose, Schminke, & Mayer, 2013). Justice research over the past 15 years has established an agent-system model first presented by Moorman (1991) with procedural justice and distributive justice linked to organizational behavior, rules and outcomes, while interactional justice is linked to supervisor behavior. Research has also identified multi-foci justice where justice is focused on multiple sources such as the organization, supervisor and co-workers (Cropanzano et al., 2001; Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). Justice variables have also been examined temporally with distributive justice being more stable than interactional justice. Hausknecht, Sturman, & Robertson (2011) found that justice is a dynamic construct. Holtz &
Harold (2009) and Silva & Caetano (2013) also report that overall justice perceptions are not stable and change over time.

**Justice Outcomes**

**Job Satisfaction.** Job satisfaction refers to the extent which a worker likes their job (Spector, 1996). Meta-analytic research conducted by Colquitt et al. (2001) and Cohen-Charash & Spector, (2001) provide evidence that all three types of justice (PJ, DJ, IJ) positively predict job satisfaction. However, more recent work in the field demonstrates that distributive justice and interactional justice are related to job satisfaction, but procedural justice is not. Research examining the relationship of POJ over time reported that distributive justice is positively related with job satisfaction (Hausknett et al., 2011). Malik & Naeem (2011) examined POJ and job satisfaction with university workers in Pakistan and report a positive relationship between job satisfaction and distributive and interactional justice. However, they did not find a relationship with procedural justice and job satisfaction. A 2015 study of Portuguese hospitality workers found that distributive justice was positively related to job satisfaction, but procedural justice was not (Lopez-Cabarcos, Machado-Lopes-Sampaio-de Pinho, Vasquez-Rodriguez, 2015).

**Organizational Commitment.** Organizational commitment refers to the desire on the part of a worker to remain with their organization (Allen & Mayer, 1990). Colquitt et al. (2001) conducted a meta-analysis and found that all types of justice are positively related to organizational commitment however, procedural justice was stronger than both distributive and interactional justice. Cohen-Charash et al. (2001) also conducted a meta-analysis which found that all types of justice were related to organizational commitment with procedural justice having the strongest relationship. Loi et al. (2006) conducted a study that found that POJ mediated by
perceived organizational support (POS) positively influenced organizational commitment. A study of 418 South Korean police officers found that organizational justice was positively related to organizational commitment, with procedural and interactional justice having an indirect relationship with organizational commitment through distributive justice (Crow, Lee, & Joo, 2012). Rai (2013) found procedural justice and distributive justice are associated with organizational commitment, while interactional justice is not related. Silva & Caetano (2013) report that procedural justice impacts organizational commitment as mediated by POS.

**Intent to Withdraw.** The intent to withdraw refers to the worker’s thoughts and desires to leave the organization (Colquitt et al., 2001). Two meta-analytic studies conducted by Colquitt et al. (2001) and Cohen-Charesh et al. (2001) found negative relationships between the intent to withdraw and organizational justice. However, the findings are mixed with some studies showing that distributive justice is negatively related to intent to withdraw, while other studies showed that both procedural and distributive justice are related and interactional justice is the least predictive. Recent research conducted continues to support mixed findings for all three types of justice being negatively related to intent to withdraw (Chang & Dubinsky, 2005; Loi et al., 2006; Choi, 2011; Chan & Jespen, 2011; Hausknecht et al., 2011; Rai, 2013).

**Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB).** OCB is a discretionary worker behavior for the organizational effectiveness, which goes beyond an employee’s formal duties or roles (Organ, 1990). Early meta-analysis conducted by Colquitt et al., (2001) and Cohen-Charesh & Spector (2001) report that both procedural justice and distributive justice are related to OCBs. The relationship between procedural justice and OCBs is a stronger linkage than that
between distributive justice and OCBs. Rego and Cunha (2010) found that Portuguese workers were more sensitive to interactional justice than either distributive or procedural justice. Within interactional justice, interpersonal justice was a stronger relationship to OCBs than informational justice. Erkutlu (2011) looked at 618 university lecturers in Turkey and found that interactional justice and OCBs are related especially in organizations that demonstrate a higher level of respect for workers. There is a weaker relationship between distributive and procedural justice and OCBs for organizations that were higher in team orientation. Choi, Moon, Ko, & Kim (2014) reported that they anticipated that all three types of justice would be related to OCBs, however, only distributive and interactional justice as mediated through organizational identification.

Mediators of Justice

Both POS and LMX are mediators of POJ when entered into regression analyses with outcomes such as job satisfaction, OCBs, intent to withdraw and organizational commitment (affective commitment) (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Loi et al., 2006; Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012; Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, & Conlon, 2013; Silva & Caetano, 2013; Park, S., Sturman, Vanderpool, & Chan, 2015).

Perceived Organizational Support (POS). Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to the degree to which an organization is perceived to value a worker’s contributions and well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). POJ mediated by POS suggests that the relationship between the organization and worker is important to worker outcomes such as affective commitment, job satisfaction, OCBs and intent to withdraw (Masterson et al., 2000; Loi et al., 2009; El Akremi et al., 2010; Silva & Caetano, 2013). El Akremi et al. (2010)
explored POJ and retaliatory behavior. POS mediates the relationship between POJ and retaliatory behavior. Organizational support is the most stable predictor of interactional justice over time (Silva & Caetano, 2013). Colquitt et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis where POS was found to mediate POJ and task performance as well as POJ and citizenship behaviors. Cheung (2013) found that POS fully mediates the effects of interpersonal and informational justice on OCBs. POS is positively related to all POJ types (Ambrose, Schminke & Mayer, 2013). POS generates a worker’s global belief about being valued and cared about by their organization and subsequently this enhances the worker’s organizational commitment and job satisfaction while decreasing their intent to leave or withdraw.

**Leader-Member Exchange (LMS).** Leader-member exchange (LMX) refers to the degree of quality of the dyadic relationship between the supervisor and worker (Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975). POJ mediated by LMX suggests that the relationship between leaders/supervisors and workers is very important to worker outcomes (Dulebohn et al., 2012). POJ as mediated by LMX is related to job satisfaction, retaliatory behaviors or intent to withdraw and OCBs (Masterson et al., 2000; El Akremi et al., 2010; Ambrose et al., 2013; Silva & Caetano, 2013). LMX is a stable predictor of interactional justice over time (Silva & Caetano, 2013).

**Summary**

This review examined the English language literature on organizational justice and RTW between 2000 and 2015. Consideration of the primary variables that have emerged over the last 15 years of study provided the groundwork for the studies that were undertaken in this thesis.
References


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Chapter 3

Abstract

The Relationship Between Organizational Justice and Return to Work: A Scoping Study

*Introduction:* Literature in the fields of organizational justice and return to work (RTW) are vast and can provide a basis from which to explore how organizational justice, a psychosocial variable, can affect an injured worker’s behavior during RTW. *Objective:* The objective of this study is to identify and describe the scope and breadth of knowledge of the relationship between fairness and RTW. The research question that guided the inquiry was “What does the organizational justice and return to work literature say about fairness and return to work?”

*Methods:* The methodology for this study was based on Arksey and O’Malley’s (2005) scoping review methodology. Arksey and O’Malley (2005) outline five steps to conducting a comprehensive scoping review: identifying a question, identifying the relevant studies, study selection, charting the data, collating, summarizing and reporting the results. The search strategy examined English articles from both bodies of literature from 2000 to 2013. Duplicates were removed, grey literature searched and the results were collated and presented using both a narrative and thematic analysis. *Results:* The review identified 14 justice/RTW articles. The descriptive analysis noted that the majority of articles were from North America, were quantitative studies, focused on global justice and were predominantly from the injured worker’s point of view. Thematic analysis reflected three major areas of research in organizational justice and RTW literature: injured worker perceptions of organizational justice and the decision to make a claim; RTW interventions including supervisor-injured worker contact and co-worker response to injured worker accommodation; and RTW outcomes satisfaction and duration.
Conclusions The results of the scoping study provided a compelling rationale for additional research. The current research examining justice and RTW highlights that justice is a psychosocial variable important to consider in future RTW studies.

Introduction

As the cost of workplace injuries and their impact on workers and employers continue to increase, research interest in disability management and factors that contribute to improved return to work (RTW) experiences and outcomes has grown (Franche, Cullen, Clarke, Irvin, Sinclair, Frank, & The Institute for Work & Health (IHW), 2005). Research shows that RTW is complex and multi-faceted and has shifted paradigms from a bio-medical model to a more comprehensive bio-psychosocial model which incorporates individual, physical, work environment, organizational and psychosocial factors. Consideration of beliefs, roles and perceptions of all stakeholders has also emerged from the RTW literature as significant in understanding how to improve RTW outcomes (Krause, Dasinger, Deegan, Rudolph, & Brand, 2001; MacEachen, Clarke, Franche, & Irwin, 2006).

One of the underlying themes identified as important to RTW is goodwill (MacEachen et al., 2006). Goodwill, even though it is intangible, sets the tone and helps to establish a culture for an organization and a willingness to participate in RTW efforts. Lack of goodwill can result in workers feeling devalued, disrespected and unsupported, potentially resulting in a lack of motivation to RTW (MacEachen et al., 2006). Workers who do not perceive an organization to be fair may feel that they are not respected (Bies & Moag, 1986) and that there is no commitment on the part of the employer to return them to their job.
Examining fairness can help to explain why injured workers’ behaviors or decisions are made and how they impact their choices around remaining at work, staying off work or ultimately leaving the organization. Fairness or organizational justice (OJ) has been well studied in the organizational literature over the past five decades and is linked to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, leader-member exchange (LMX) intent to withdraw and sickness absence (Greenberg, 1994; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Elovainio, Kivimaki, & Vahtera, 2002; Ndjaboue, Brisson, & Vezina, 2012; Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, & Conlon, 2013; Rai, 2013).

**Research Question**

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the scope and breadth of knowledge of the relationship between fairness and RTW. The research question that guided the inquiry was “What does the organizational justice and return to work literature say about fairness and return to work?”

**Methodology**

A scoping study has emerged as one method of presenting an overview of material and “mapping” of key concepts in the relevant literature of interest (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Levac, Colquhoun, & O’Brien, 2010). Unlike other reviews, such as the systematic literature review, a scoping study seeks to answer a broad question and is not focused as much with design or quality of the study, but more with providing a narrative around the topic of concern incorporating grey literature as well as research articles. Scoping studies are useful in areas or disciplines such as occupational rehabilitation (RTW) with emerging evidence or in identifying
gaps in the existing research literature (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Levac et al., 2010). The selection of a scoping study methodology also provides a consistent framework for future researchers to easily replicate the findings improving rigour (May, Roberts, & Popjay, 2001). The scoping study methodology based on Arksey & O’Malley (2005) was selected for this study, as it provides a consistent and accepted framework for identifying the breadth and nature of research in the two bodies of literature, summarizing and analyzing the data and providing a discussion for future research. Arksey & O’Malley (2005) have identified five steps in conducting a comprehensive scoping study: identifying a question, identifying the relevant studies, study selection, charting the data, collating, summarizing and reporting the results and an optional sixth step - consulting with stakeholders. The provisional sixth step was not included in this study as cost and time constraints prohibited dissemination of the study results to stakeholders such as researchers, employers or injured workers. Levac et al. (2010) completed a review of scoping study methodology and provided clarification around the steps introduced by Arksey & O’Malley (2005), specifically recommending that the authors clarify the broader question the study seeks to answer, thereby providing a clear purpose for the study, its intended outcome and a framework to help articulate the findings. As research in the combined field of organizational justice or fairness and RTW has only begun to emerge over the past 13 years, the use of a scoping study is an appropriate methodology to map what the literature says, identify research gaps and future research directions.

**Search Strategy**

A search strategy was developed that addressed the research question, and searches were conducted within 9 databases: CINAHL, MEDLINE, PubMed, PsycINFO, EMBASE, American
Business Index (ABI), ECONLit and Sociological Abstracts. To ensure a thorough and exhaustive search process, searches were conducted in both the organizational and RTW literatures. Search terms consistent with organizational literature and rehabilitation terminology were used to locate articles that met the inclusion criteria (IC). An exhaustive search was conducted within both fields as they are both distinct and this would minimize the chance that relevant articles would not be selected. “Justice and RTW” was defined by articles that included references to both justice and RTW or a component of RTW. Selected search terms were identified as relevant to the databases and were consistently applied to ensure a measured and thorough search strategy. Organizational justice terms (organizational/organizational justice and procedural justice, distributive justice, interactive justice and fairness) were searched first within each database independently (ranging from 200 to 38000 articles per database) and then combined together, resulting in one large group of organizational justice articles. These were then searched again within each database combined with the RTW terms (return to work, injured workers, sickness absence, work-related absenteeism, rehabilitation and disability management). The search was limited to articles published from 2000 - 2013 since the field of organizational justice underwent several comprehensive literature reviews at that time which would include any results prior to 2000. Articles were limited to English language manuscripts only. The combined results from the database searches resulted in 1627 articles. Duplicates were eliminated and abstracts were briefly reviewed to determine if they met the inclusion criteria (IC) - RTW and Justice. Those that appeared to meet the IC were then saved to RefWorks, an online research management tool. Duplicates were checked for and removed from this group, leaving 133 articles. Further review of these full articles was conducted and those meeting the IC were selected for the study. To attempt to ensure no articles or information relevant to this study were
missed grey literature including additional peer-reviewed reports, articles or working papers was searched for using Google Scholar, NIDMAR and the Institute for Work and Health websites. Bibliographies of the selected articles were hand searched as were relevant journals including Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, Journal of Applied Psychology, Disability and Rehabilitation, Journal of Organizational Behavior, Social Science and Medicine, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology and the International Journal of Workplace Health Management. This resulted in 12 articles being selected for inclusion. Finally, citations were searched based on the selected articles to determine if any additional articles could be solicited. This resulted in two additional articles being identified. The final number of articles selected for analysis was 14.

Data Charting

Data charting is an essential piece of the scoping study. It allows for the extraction of data by applying a common analytical framework and providing meaning to the material through the identification of key themes and issues (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). Data for this study were charted in an Excel spreadsheet as per recommendations from Arksey & O’Malley (2005) noting the author(s), country, year of publication, title/journal, purpose of the study, method, outcome measures, key findings and future research suggestions. Tables 1, 2 and 3 are appended to this chapter and provide a summary of the scoping review articles. The data collected were then collated and presented with both a narrative and thematic description as per the recommendation of Arksey & O’Malley (2005). The descriptive narrative is drawn from the numerical analysis providing a consistent method of considering all data and
identifying common issues across the literature. The thematic analysis provides a mechanism to identify themes and to place them within a RTW framework.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Figure 1 indicates the process undertaken to select articles for this study. The year of publication column in Table 1 indicates that articles are published fairly evenly over the time period with slightly more articles in the last 6 years over the initial 5 years. The majority of articles (79%) were North American. Again, the majority of the articles were quantitative studies (64%) and three of the studies (21%) were models of justice focusing on issues of accommodation. The remainder of the articles focused on qualitative approaches or the development of models.

Five articles examined OJ as a global factor with two of them indicating that it combined all types of justice into a global factor. Three of these articles considered both procedural and distributive justice together but did not include interactional justice. Four articles considered procedural justice independently, with one considering distributive justice and one considering interactional justice independently (Greenberg, 2004). The majority of articles (10) also considered fairness or OJ as either one of the main variables in the study, while 4 noted it as an outcome variable. Twenty three percent of the articles examined justice and RTW from a co-worker perspective, while the majority of the articles (71%) looked at the issue from the injured worker’s perspective. No studies examined justice and RTW from the perspective of other
Figure 1: Scoping Study Database Search Strategy

Combined Database results (OJ + RTW)
- Remove pre-2000 articles
- Brief review of abstract for IC

RefWorks (save suitable articles)
- Remove duplicate articles
- Screen for IC
- Read full articles
- Selected articles

Additional Search Strategies
- Check selected article citations
- Check selected article bibliographies
- Hand review journals
- Searched Google Scholar, NIDMAR and IWH sites
- Final articles selected for study

Organizational Justice
Search Terms

RTW Search Terms

EMBASE N=2678
PsycINFO N=38826
Soc Abs N=6133
ABI N=5631
EconLit N=3583
CINHAHL N=857
PubMed N=202
MEDLINE N=1756
stakeholders such as the supervisor/employer or healthcare professionals. One study examined the psychometric properties of an organizational justice scale. The authors developed a theoretically based and validated scale of perceived justice within the context of the compensation process in RTW. Their findings supported the internal validity and concurrent validity of a 15-item measure – the Perceived Justice of the Compensation Process Scale as applied to injured workers with a musculoskeletal injury and lost time claim.

**Thematic Analysis**

Analysis of the results of the scoping review resulted in the identification of three major thematic areas: claims; RTW strategies; and RTW outcomes.

**Theme 1 - Claims:** Three of the fourteen studies addressed the perception of justice in relation to claims (Roberts & Markel, 2001; Winefield, Saebel, & Winefield, 2008; Franche, Severin, Hyunmi, Hogg-Johnson, Hepburn, Vidmar, & MacEachen, 2009). Two of the studies found that all four types of organizational justice (procedural, distributive, informational and interpersonal) correlated to the decision to make a claim (Roberts & Markel, 2001; Franche et al., 2009). Additionally when examining pre-claim perceptions of justice, Winefield et al., (2008) report that an injured worker’s perception of procedural justice based on pre-claim activities such as performance appraisals, promotions and redundancies correlated with the decision to submit a claim. However, post-decision fairness was not found to have any relation to the decision to claim (Roberts & Markel, 2001)

**Theme 2 - RTW strategies:** Analysis of the articles around justice and RTW strategies further identified 2 sub themes: Supervisor Contact and Accommodation

**a) Supervisor Contact:** Four of the studies addressed the perception of justice and supervisor contact (Roberts & Markel, 2001; Shaw, Robertson, Pransky, & McLellan, 2003;
Winefield et al., 2008; Hepburn, Kelloway, & Franche, 2010b). Hepburn et al. (2010b) reported that procedural and distributive justice independently and significantly link to supervisor contact and support with distributive fairness accounting for 10 percent of the variance and procedural justice accounting for 20 percent. Perception of supervisor fairness was found to result in improved RTW outcomes for cardiac patients (Du, Cheng, Hwang, Chen, & Su, 2012). Roberts & Markel (2001) noted that supervisors are the employer contact called upon to provide disability management policy and procedural information to injured workers. This information was used by injured workers to determine their perceptions of justice. Supervisor contact and provision of information to injured workers was also related to injured workers’ self-report of absence (Hepburn, Franche, & Francis, 2010a). Finally, although not tested directly, Winefield et al. (2008) comment on the fact that enhancing the quality of supervisor-worker relationships by improving the procedures (dignified, respectful, give workers a voice in determining outcome, listen to workers and aim for maximum transparency) can lead to a decrease in claim decisions.

b) Accommodation: Six articles addressed the role of co-worker perceptions of fairness around accommodations for a worker (Colella, 2001; Colella, A., Paetzold, & Belliveau, 2004; Nichols, 2008; Paetzold, Garcia, Colella, Ren, Triana, & Ziebro, 2008; Dunstan & MacEachen, 2013; Carpenter & Paetzold, 2013). Noting that all stakeholder perceptions of fairness should be considered when examining the impact of RTW strategies such as accommodation, the current research in this area highlights how co-worker perceptions of fairness can impact their acceptance of worker accommodations. Procedures are important to co-workers as they can lessen the impact of personally negative outcomes (distributive justice) that occur as a result of accommodation (Colella et al., 2004). Carpenter & Paetzold (2013) found that granting an
accommodation needs to be perceived as a fair process (procedural justice) by all stakeholders. If co-workers feel that the process was unfair or that the worker being accommodated benefitted more than they did, then co-workers may withdraw and work less to make the situation appear fairer to them (Carpenter & Paetzold, 2013). Co-worker perceptions of procedural and distributive justice can result in changes in behavior towards the worker being accommodated (Colella et al., 2004). Factors that co-workers consider when making fairness judgments around accommodation can include: type of accommodation, nature of the work, socialization process, type of disability and organization’s history of fraudulent behavior (Nichols, 2008). Procedures that are considered important by co-workers’ consideration of fairness include clear and transparent processes which provide the worker with a voice in the process (Colella et al., 2004).

**Theme 3- RTW Outcomes:** Four of the studies commented on RTW outcomes including satisfaction and duration (Du et al., 2012; Ybema & Van den Bos, 2010; Franche et al., 2009 and Hepburn et al., 2010a). Global fairness was found to be a factor, as higher perceptions of workplace justice were significantly linked to higher RTW in cardiac patients (Du et al., 2012). Ybema & Van den Bos (2010) reported that distributive justice was negatively correlated with length of time off sick or sickness absence. Interestingly, Hepburn et al. (2010a) found that both informational and interpersonal justice were correlated with self-reported absence, however, informational justice was positively correlated with self-reported absence rather than negatively correlated as expected. This may be because the injured worker is more aware of the policies and their rights as a worker and as a result they believe it is appropriate and accepted to take time off work to recover. Interpersonal justice was negatively correlated with self-reported absence as expected since the quality of the worker’s relationship with their supervisor is a factor in the worker’s decisions related to RTW. Finally, Franche et al. (2009) reported on a worker’s feeling
that they had returned to work too soon and noted that it was negatively correlated with all four justice types but their satisfaction with the quality of the work accommodation was only significantly associated with procedural and distributive justice.

**Future research gaps and directions**

A range of future research initiatives is recommended based on the 14 articles reviewed for this scoping study.

**RTW Strategies and Accommodation:** Four studies indicate that further examination of accommodation would be beneficial. The current articles on accommodation are primarily vignette-based studies, and real world research is recommended by the authors as a future research direction. The articles also focus on the co-worker’s perception of fairness and how that affects their level of support for the accommodation; however, research into supervisor response to the request for accommodation and their perception of fairness would assist in understanding stakeholder roles in successful RTW. Franche et al. (2005) clearly link a range of Workplace–Based (WB) RTW strategies, including ergonomic assessments, early workplace contact, offer of work accommodation, contact between healthcare provider and employer, and a designated RTW coordinator, to duration and costs, so including these variables in future research on perceptions of justice and RTW may offer insight to employers on WB RTW strategies, affected by injured workers’ perceptions of justice, that impact duration and cost. Hepburn et al. (2010) found that initial examination of ergonomic assessments and the use of a RTW coordinator did not demonstrate any relationship to workers’ perception of justice; however, as this is only one
study it still warrants further exploration before being ruled out as a factor impacting POJ and RTW.

Methodological Issues: Three articles recommend additional research using a longitudinal study format, with two articles recommending that research combining all three types of OJ be conducted. Future research in fairness and RTW with qualitative methods is also noted as only one of the fourteen articles was a qualitative study with the balance being theoretical (4) or quantitative (9). Two studies recommend additional work in the area of fairness and RTW as well as replication of the small amount of research conducted to date.

Other Recommendations from the Scoping Review Article Authors: At least one study notes that there should be future research into the following areas: aging workers, management practices, presenteeism, compensation process, further validation of the Perceived Justice of Compensation scale, WB RTW strategies and outcomes. Further, one study discusses the need for future research based on a larger range of employees with a variety of illnesses or injuries, since the majority of the current POJ-RTW articles deal with symptoms of depression and/or musculoskeletal injuries. The role of perceived organizational support was mentioned in one article, with future research into its role as a mediator of POJ and RTW outcomes recommended. Finally, one article highlighted the need for additional research into the role of POJ as a mediator of WB RTW strategies. Examination of these areas within the context of worker perceptions of justice and RTW would continue to refine our understanding of how an injured worker’s perception of justice, impacts their decisions, behaviors and quality of their relationship with management, especially supervisors, in the workplace. Further investigation
would allow employers to expand management training and influence disability management policy development.

**Discussion**

**Summary of Findings**

This scoping study clearly demonstrates that there is paucity of research into the area of fairness and RTW, as evidenced by the low number of articles identified in the search process (n=14). The research or the lack of research, however, provides a compelling rationale for additional research to be done in this area. The current research has provided minimal information around a worker’s decision to claim, their response to workplace-based intervention strategies, or outcomes. The literature has only begun to explore the role that justice has in RTW and disability management. Even preliminary data that focuses on the role of the supervisor and quality of that relationship to injured workers and their decisions around RTW adds knowledge that can from a practical viewpoint be used to modify supervisor-worker relationships and improve RTW outcomes. Psychosocial factors such as justice provide an important piece in understanding how injured workers make decisions related to process and outcome. Further exploration of justice as it is applied to disability management processes and RTW strategies and outcomes is important. The articles focus on aspects of the RTW experience from primarily the injured or ill employee’s perspective with only a few articles examining how other stakeholders in the RTW process perceive fairness and how that perception affects RTW outcomes such as organizational commitment and duration of time off work. Examining other stakeholder perspectives on perceived justice and RTW may help to understand the behaviors of co-workers, supervisors and family and how their actions impact the worker and the worker’s perceptions of
fairness. The articles are primarily from North America with very few outside of the continent, even though there has been an explosion of RTW research in Europe (Rollen & Gehanno, 2012) in the past five years. The articles are also not demonstrating any increase in interest in fairness and RTW, with the articles being scattered throughout the 13 year time frame. A trend is emerging with the more recent studies beginning to look at both fairness and RTW across the entire RTW process and in more realistic settings. Early research focused on accommodation but used vignettes instead of real life settings.

**Future Research Recommendations:**

In addition to the many recommendations from the study authors, it is clear that there is a vast potential for future research in the area of justice and RTW. Examining the current literature through the lens of both a bio-psychosocial approach and disability management model helps to highlight several additional areas for consideration. Both the bio-psychosocial approach and disability management model promote a multi-disciplinary approach to RTW (Shrey & Hursh, 1999). Existing research has only examined injured worker and co-worker perceptions of justice and RTW, with many of the stakeholders still not included in the discussion. Understanding the role that employers and supervisors have in developing both their own perceptions of justice and RTW but also how their actions impact other stakeholders is worthy of future investigation. Using social exchange theory, the predominant lens in organizational justice literature, to expand on the quality and nature of the exchange relationship between injured workers and supervisors and/or the organization would provide insight into worker behaviors and actions in a RTW context. Gaps are also noted in understanding how a RTW coordinator can affect the perceptions of justice as they may influence both process and interactions between the
injured worker and supervisor/organization, thereby influencing worker perceptions of justice. Other WB RTW interventions also merit future consideration including ergonomic strategies, the role of healthcare provider and employer communication, and accommodations, as these may all be seen as mechanisms by which the employer demonstrates support and care for the injured worker, thereby enhancing worker perception of justice. Finally, the role of RTW outcomes including satisfaction, commitment, turnover, and duration continue to provide options to explore with perceptions of justice as the antecedent, mediated by POS. The entire disability management or RTW process is also important to understand how process continues to effect perceptions of justice as organizational process has been positively correlated with perceptions of procedural justice (Colquitt et al., 2001).

**Limitations**

This scoping study, while adding to the knowledge base on fairness and RTW, has several limitations. The study is limited by the fact that only English language articles were selected and this may have excluded relevant research done in Europe, Asia or elsewhere. In addition, no articles before 2000 were considered in the study. However, a number of substantial systematic, meta-analytic reviews in both the OJ and RTW literature, which were conducted in the 2000’s were included in the search, thereby potentially including pre-2000 research results. Thirdly, recent discussion on scoping study methodology by Levac et al., (2010) and Pham, Rajic, Greig, Sargeant, Papadopoulos, & McEwan (2014) have moved the suggested sixth step outlined in the original Arksey & O’Malley (2005) methodology to a recommended step. As it was only a recommended step by Arksey & O’Malley (2005) the recognized leaders in scoping methodology, this study did not include the sixth step due to restrictions of cost and time. The
final or sixth step involves adding in feedback from stakeholders within the RTW process such as injured employees, employers, healthcare providers or third party insurers. Stakeholders are invited to provide input on the themes, as they have a vested interest in this area and would ensure that all material relevant to the discussion have been reviewed and included. Additionally, more than one reviewer is recommended for data extraction and analysis (Pham et al., 2014) to minimize reporting bias. This data extraction was conducted by only one author resulting in the potential exclusion of relevant material to the discussion.

**Conclusion**

This scoping review clearly demonstrates the need for additional research into the area of organizational justice and return to work. Although the research is predominantly North American, there is global interest primarily derived from European, Asian and Australian sources. Research focusing on all types of organizational justice across the entire RTW spectrum is encouraged. Focus on different stakeholders, types of illness/injuries as well as additional work from both qualitative and longitudinal studies would be beneficial. Examining POJ and RTW through the lens of social exchange and a bio-psychosocial model will add to the discussion of how injured workers form relationships across different dimensions of the RTW process, thereby impacting the perceptions of justice and RTW outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment and turnover. Finally, examining the role of fairness as both a predictor and mediator throughout the RTW process is important to understanding how fairness is impacting RTW and will be an important focus of future research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/ Journal</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dunstan, D.A &amp;</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Theoretical Model of Co-Worker Responses to Work Reintegration Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacEachen, E/</td>
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<td>Journal of</td>
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<td>Rehabilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carpenter, N.C. &amp;</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>An Examination of Factors Influencing Responses to Requests for Disability Accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paetzold, R.L./</td>
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<td>Rehabilitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Du, C-L. et al./</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Workplace justice and psychosocial work hazards in association with return to work in male workers with coronary heart diseases: A prospective study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Journal of Cardiology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hepburn, C.G. et al./</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Successful return to work: the role of fairness and workplace-based strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Journal of Workplace Health Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hepburn, C.G. et al./</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Early employer response to workplace injury: What injured workers perceive as fair and why these perceptions matter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal of</td>
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<td>Health Psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological Injury and Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winefield, H.R et al./</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Employee perceptions of fairness as predictors of worker’s compensation claims for psychological injury: An Australian case-control study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress and Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nichols, J.L./ Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>The influence of co-worker justice perceptions on worksite accommodations and the return to work of persons with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author/ Journal</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Dunstan, D.A &amp; MacEachen, E/ Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation</td>
<td>To formulate a theoretical model of the influences on and outcomes of wo-worker responses within work reintegration</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Four key findings re co-workers' behaviors towards an accommodated employee are influenced by: 1. The attributes of that employee, the illness or injury, the co-worker themselves and the work environment; 2. The influences-behavior relationship is mediated by perceptions of fairness of the accommodation; 3. Co-worker's behaviors affect all work reintegration outcomes; and 4. Co-worker's behaviors can vary from support to antagonism and are moderated by type of support required, the social intensity of the job and the level of antagonism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter, N.C. &amp; Paetzold, R.L./ Rehabilitation</td>
<td>To examine the influences of responses to</td>
<td>Vignette based/Quantitative</td>
<td>Disability related results: H1a partial support type of disability increased decision to grant more time; H1b</td>
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</table>
confirmed cause of impairment affects intention to grant an accommodation; H2a confirmed prior accommodation request decision affects intention to grant accommodation; H2b and c partial support increased amount of time but did not double the amount; H2d not supported no combined effect on decision to grant accommodation when request and disclosure of impairment considered appropriate; H3 partial support procedural justice is a factor in accommodation decisions; H4 only empathy increased the decision to grant extra time. **Implications:** Signals the need for organization leaders to ensure that the process of granting and implementing accommodations are perceived as fair by all employees; process of providing incentives and rewards to employees also needs to be perceived as fair; co-workers subsequent reactions to perceived inequity may be to decrease their own efforts at work in order to make the situation appear more fair to them.

**Du, C-L. et al./International Journal of Cardiology**

To examine the impacts of psychosocial work hazards on return to work at 12 months following the first onset of acute myocardial infarction (AMI) or severe CHD.  

Prospective/Quantitative  

Most employees had returned to work at 4 months (90%); high demands and low control were more likely to have an unsuccessful RTW; lower levels of workplace justice significantly decrease the likelihood of successful RTW, but not clinical factors; and both work control and justice was significantly associated with RTW, when combining both in the same model for multivariate analysis, workplace justice but not work strain remained a strong negative predictor of unsuccessful RTW in CHD patients.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Study Title</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ybema, J.F. &amp; Van den Bos, K</td>
<td>To examine how organizational justice (OJ) is longitudinally related to symptoms of depression and sickness absence</td>
<td>Longitudinal 3 wave study/Quantitative</td>
<td>Longitudinal effects from organizational justice to depressive symptoms and sickness absences were much stronger than the reversed effects; DJ negatively related to depressive symptoms within a single period; PJ negatively related to depressive symptoms within a single period (1 year); No reverse relationship i.e. depressive symptoms did not lower PJ or DJ at 1 year; DJ and sickness absence are negatively related; DJ and PJ strengthened each other over time; Sickness absence contributed to higher depressive symptoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepburn, C.G. et al.</td>
<td>To propose that the presence of workplace-based RTW strategies would reduce the duration of work disability; enhance mental health and affective commitment; introduce interactional justice within the RTW context</td>
<td>Cross-sectional/Quantitative</td>
<td>Self-reported absences linked to fairness; informational and interpersonal justice significantly associated with self-reported days absent; increased perceptions of informational justice were related to increases in self-reported days absent; increased perception of interpersonal justice were related to decreases in self-reported days absent; disability measure most under control of the injured worker seems to be related to perceptions of fairness; self-reported absence may better reflect the true amount of time needed to RTW;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepburn, C.G. et al.</td>
<td>To examine whether early employer response to workplace injury affects injured workers’ subsequent attitudes and</td>
<td>Longitudinal/Quantitative</td>
<td>Supervisor reactions and early contact emerged as significant and independent predictors of both forms of justice; Accounted for a significant proportion of the variance explained DJ (10%) and PJ (20%); More fully examine the relationships; SEM justice hypothesized to mediate the relationships between early employer response as the predictors and</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Mental Health</th>
<th>Fairness Predicted</th>
<th>H1 – denied claims are significantly negatively correlated with procedural, distributive and interpersonal justice with procedural and distributive justice having a more pronounced effect.</th>
<th>H2 all four types of justice have a significant association with longer decision to accept a claim.; H3 The feeling that one had RTW too soon was significantly associated with lower justice on all scales.; H4 no-yes groups are statistically significant with all 4 justices, yes-going only associated with distributive justice; and H5 distributive and procedural justice are significantly associated with higher levels of satisfaction with the quality of work accommodation. Scale was validated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franche, R-L. et al. / Psychological Injury and Law</td>
<td>both affective commitment and depressive symptoms as the outcomes; Fairness predicted both affective commitment and depressive symptoms; Ergo assessment and presence of RTW coordination did not predict fairness</td>
<td>To develop a theoretically based and validated scale assessing the perceived lack of justice of the workers compensation process, as self-reported by injured workers with back and upper extremity musculoskeletal disorders</td>
<td>Prospective/Quantitative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Winefield, H.R et al. / Stress and Health</td>
<td>To understand the link between perceived injustice in workplace decision-making procedures and claims for acute psychological injury</td>
<td>Largest difference was with PF as those individuals who made a claim were more likely to report unfairness of performance appraisal, appointment promotion, and redundancy procedures in their workplace; Claims related to low job sat; high psych distress; high job insecurity; low autonomy; low PF; low trust and high neg. affectivity; Improve quality of supervisor – worker relationships with particular focus on procedure i.e. dignified, respectful, give subordinates a voice in determining outcomes and listen to them, aim for maximum transparency.</td>
<td>Longitudinal, cross-sectional, case-control/Quantitative</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Research Focus</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nichols, J.L.</td>
<td>Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling</td>
<td>Literature review? No methodology identified for conducting review.</td>
<td>To examine factors associated with co-worker attitudes and perceptions of procedural justice in the workplace and how they are related to individuals with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment</td>
<td>Changing co-worker or supervisor attitudes is the most difficult change to make when trying to implement accommodations; Co-workers perceptions of justice can be modified by: Type of accommodation; nature of the work; socialization process; Type of disability (visible, not visible); Level of disclosure around disability; Social undesirability (self-caused such as drug abuse, alcoholism or HIV/Aids); Organization’s previous history of fraudulent claims; Other factors to consider: Negative affect – difficulty with being around individual with a disability; Strain due to communication issues; personality factors such as prejudice, low tolerance; and lack or prior contact with people with a disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paetzold, R.L.</td>
<td>Basic and Applied Social Psychology</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>To examine fairness perceptions of accommodating people with disabilities</td>
<td>Main effect for accommodation granted – low perceived fairness; Perceived fairness was low when the person with the disability performed best; Low organizational justice when accommodation granted and person with disability performed the best; Granting of an accommodation needs to be perceived to be a fair process by all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colella, A.</td>
<td>Personnel Psychology</td>
<td>Model</td>
<td>To present propositions to be studied in future empirical research and suggestions to managers who desire to reduce negative co-worker reactions</td>
<td>Factors may lead co-workers to infer that an accommodation is procedurally fair, even when the accommodation may result in an unfavorable outcome for them personally; i.e. procedural justice moderates the impact of distributive justice; Co-workers are important stakeholders in the accommodation process;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shaw, W.S. et al./Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation</td>
<td>To identify aspects of supervisor involvement most valued by employees for post injury recovery and return to work</td>
<td>Qualitative/Affinity Mapping Process</td>
<td>Fairness/respect accounted for 8% of the total statements; Positive statements (58%) included supervisor is non-judgmental and sincere; no-fault attitude regarding injuries; Negative statements (42%) included pressuring the worker to return to work; making the worker feel like a burden and inequity in effort to accommodate injured worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colella, A./Academy of Management</td>
<td>To present a model of when and how coworkers judge the distributive fairness of workplace accommodations of employees with disabilities</td>
<td>Model</td>
<td>Extent to which co-workers use equity, need or a combination of both in judging the distributive fairness of an accommodation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts, K. &amp; Markel, K.S./Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</td>
<td>To explore the relationship among injured workers’ perceptions of workplace justice, perceptions of employers’ disability related policies and the decision to file a workers’ compensation</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>T1 interactional justice was positively related to perceptions of employer disability related practices measured 1 year PI T2 claim decision was unrelated to perceptions of justice but perceptions of disability related practices was significantly related to all 3 types of justice; H1partial - IJ is negative and significantly related to filing a claim; H2 not supported - DJ positively and statistically significant relations with perceptions of employer support (opposite as to expectations) and PF &amp; IJ did not; H3 not supported - claim filing had no relation</td>
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</table>
Table 3: Future Research Considerations – Scoping Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/ Journal</th>
<th>Future Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dunstan, D.A &amp; MacEachen, E/ Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation</td>
<td>1. Propose a work reintegration model to provide a framework for future research into the influences on and impacts of co-workers on workplace reintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter, N.C. &amp; Paetzold, R.L./ Rehabilitation Psychology</td>
<td>1. Further research is needed to investigate whether intentions to grant or deny a reasonable accommodation will lead to behavioral intentions such as turnover; 2. Future research should use multiple vignettes to examine different types of disabilities (both visible and invisible) is important to understand the within person differences in reactions and perceptions of disabilities as well as differences in relevant outcomes; 3. To use &quot;real life&quot; employees and supervisors in addition to vignettes to examine factors in the study but also others that are likely to play a role in the accommodation process; 4. Would the results differ if the tasks were team-based or more cooperative; and 5. Perceptions may differ based on respondent's role i.e. different roles may have different knowledge about disabilities thus influencing their perceptions, attitudes and decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du, C-L. et al./ International Journal of Cardiology</td>
<td>1. No future research noted by authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ybema, J.F. &amp; Van den Bos, K / Social Science and Medicine</td>
<td>1. More research is needed on the underlying process that explains the longitudinal effects of SA on depressive symptoms; 2. Future research into demographic variables on OJ i.e. age, gender; 3. Future research should include IJ; 4. Incorporate use of diary studies or natural experiments to examine immediate results of OJ on psychological wellbeing and SA; and 5. Incorporate other possible related constructs such as social support at work and working conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepburn, C.G. et al./ International Journal</td>
<td>1. Future research would benefit from inclusion of other types of justice (PJ &amp; DJ); 2. Future research should include POS (process fairness strong antecedent of POS) and POS mediates relationship between PJ and outcomes such as OC and</td>
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</table>

to post claim fairness; H4 supported - employer support positively related to all OJ; Employees rely on supervisor for information on disability management policies and use this to assess OJ as they don't know much about the process; Important to consider the quality of the relationship with the supervisor.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Suggested Future Research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hepburn, C.G. et al./ <em>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</em></td>
<td>1. Future research should look at new early RTW strategies that could promote fairness perceptions or study the mechanisms by which these studies promote fairness (comparison standards the injured workers use to make fairness judgments); 2. Include DJ related to equality or fairness relative to non-injured workers or co-workers; 3. Consider the impact that fairness has on presenteeism; 4. Consider measure of worker's motivation to work and their organizational citizenship behavior; 5. Replicate findings; 6. Explore ways to include objective measures of physiological stress reactions or the physical hazards of the participants jobs; 7. Examine the quality or tone of the injured workers experience with WB strategies; and 8. Study implications of early RTW experience on worker attitudes and behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franche, R-L. et al./ <em>Psychological Injury and Law</em></td>
<td>1. Future research should focus on expanding external validity of the scale by examining relationships with return to work and health and work-related absences using a longitudinal approach; to look at concurrent validity relating the 4 subscales to other aspects of insurer-worker relationship and interactions and address the issue of construct discrimination of the subscales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winefield, H.R et al./ <em>Stress and Health</em></td>
<td>1. Future research would benefit from inclusion of other types of justice (PJ &amp; DJ); 2. Future research should include POS (process fairness strong antecedent of POS) and POS mediates relationship between PJ and outcomes such as OC and organizational citizenship behaviors; 3. POS as a mediator between PJ and RTW; 4. Investigate fairness of other WB strategies i.e. ergo ax; 5. Examine link between WB strategies and OC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichols, J.L./ <em>Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling</em></td>
<td>1. Future research should look at new early RTW strategies that could promote fairness perceptions or study the mechanisms by which these studies promote fairness (comparison standards the injured workers use to make fairness judgments); 2. Include DJ related to equality or fairness relative to non-injured workers or co-workers; 3. Consider the impact that fairness has on presenteeism; 4. Consider measure of worker's motivation to work and their organizational citizenship behavior; 5. Replicate findings; 6. Explore ways to include objective measures of physiological stress reactions or the physical hazards of the participants jobs; 7. Examine the quality or tone of the injured workers experience with WB strategies; and 8. Study implications of early RTW experience on worker attitudes and behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paetzold, R.L. et al./ <em>Basic and Applied Social Psychology</em></td>
<td>1. Replicate with larger numbers of employees; 2. Controlled evaluation of interventions aimed to change management practices with longitudinal follow up are required to show how OJ are related to management behavior and how these affect decisions to claim for psychological injury.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colella, A. et al./ <em>Personnel Psychology</em></td>
<td>1. What are the implications of co-worker PJ on accommodation as workforce ages; 2. Area of socialization and its impact in the workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Journal/Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shaw, W.S. et al./Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation</td>
<td>1. The ways in which granting an accommodation causes the least amount of disruption for all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colella, A./Academy of Management</td>
<td>1. Future research should consider scenarios where the outcome of the accommodation had positive implications for co-workers; 2. Include reactions to the bigger decision of whether or not to provide an accommodation under conditions where co-workers are aware of the denial; 3. Empirical work that examines fairness issues in a wide variety of accommodation contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts, K. &amp; Markel, K.S./Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</td>
<td>1. More research studies are needed to describe specific interactions with supervisors and others that facilitate recovery and prevent disability from work related health problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


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Chapter 4

Researcher Reflections on the Phenomenological Research Process

“It seems important to consider what a personal element does in analysis and how it contributes to a larger process”

De Vaalt (1997)

Theoretical Perspective – Phenomenology

In 1913 Husserl wrote the book “Ideas” introducing phenomenology, a philosophical movement, as an alternative to the natural scientific method (Knaack, 1984). Phenomenology’s goal is to examine the “lived experience” of the individual and to understand the subjective meaning of their experience (Keen, 1975). The use of description to reveal the structure of the individual’s experience allows us to understand what the participants’ personal meaning is rather than to explain how and why the meaning arises (Finlay, 1998). Colaizzi (1978) summarized the basic phenomenological assumptions with respect to experience. Experience is a) objectively real for me and for others, b) not an internal state, but a mode of presence in the world and c) existentially significant, a legitimate and necessary content for understanding human psychology. Phenomenology requires that the researcher separate their personal views and preconceptions from the phenomena being studied (Jooten, McGhee, & Marland, 2009). Bracketing in phenomenology is an effort by the researcher to maintain “objectivity” through identifying their biases, beliefs and values (Jooten et al., 2009). Phenomenological reduction or bracketing occurs throughout all stages of the research project.
Pre-Research Stage

Bracketing

In the pre-research phase, bracketing provides the structure for the researcher to lay out their presuppositions. By bracketing these beliefs, thoughts and values, the researcher becomes aware of the potential role that these can play in the data collection and analysis phases of the study. Bracketing and reflexivity work as one, or are “fruit from the same tree” (Ahern, 1999). If as a researcher you are not reflexive, it is difficult to identify what potential biases, beliefs or values you have that need to be bracketed out so that their impact is minimized or eliminated in both the collection and analysis of data. Reflexivity requires time and effort throughout the research process and the researcher will want to return to these statements of belief, values, presuppositions, etc. with support from their research team to identify where there are issues, understand their impact and work to remove them from influencing the researcher’s interpretation of the “lived experience”.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity, one of the pillars of qualitative research (Fontana, 2004), allows the researcher to examine their past experiences to probe what they may mean to the phenomenon under study. As part of bracketing within a phenomenological study, the researcher can return to their experiences and determine how or if they are impacting the interview process and analysis. Through thoughtful, conscious, self-awareness (Finlay, 2002) the researcher can use reflexivity as a tool to promote understanding of the phenomenon. Parahoo (2006) provided the definition that reflexivity is a continuous process of reflection by the researcher on his or her values,
preconceptions, behavior or presence and those of the participants which can affect the
interpretation of responses.

One of the first steps in my research on the phenomenon of an injured worker’s
experience of fairness within their return to work process was to reflect on my past experiences,
beliefs and suppositions in order to bracket out presuppositions that I hold that can affect the
understanding of the participants’ personal lived experiences. Using those presuppositions, I
looked at each interview through a more objective lens and was aware of how my values and
beliefs may impact my responses to the participant and their experience. In the final analysis of
each interview and the research project, its chunks of meaning, themes and thematic summary, I
returned to my presuppositions in an effort to minimize, or at the very least recognize, where I
was challenged to remain impartial and objective thus using my transparency to enhance the
trustworthiness of the overall project.

My work experience has encompassed roles as a front line manager within a mental
health facility, a small business owner of a rehabilitation company and direct work with injured
or ill workers as a rehabilitation counselor. All of these experiences contribute to my beliefs,
values and expectations around return to work for workers who have a disability.

**My Experience – Bracketed Out**

As I reflect back over the past 25 years of my work life, it is important to this
research project that I look carefully at these experiences to identify presuppositions that I need
to work with and learn from as a co-partner with the study participants in describing their life
experience.
Frontline Manager

As a front line manager in a mental health facility for 6 years, I was involved with challenging the vocational role of clients with a chronic history of mental illness. Working within a traditional vocational “workshop” setting with 10 vocational staff and a union presented challenges that even today are reflected in my responses to injured workers within a unionized setting. The union in that environment presented to me as a hostile and unfriendly system that did not support improvement for the clients, but rather protection of the workers at all cost. Even for workers who embraced change as a positive experience, my relationship with them was, in my opinion, tainted by the union’s protectionist approach. As a young frontline manager, I did not feel supported by senior management and struggled to deal with the changes affecting the clients, the staff and the union. However, at the end of the experience I was able to effect change and move the “workshop” approach to a “supportive employment” approach offering clients more options to re-enter the work world. These experiences so affected me that I consciously chose to avoid working for employers with unions and large administrative structures. In reflecting back, the strength of my feelings even as I write these thoughts down remains strong.

The first presupposition arises from this work experience; I believe that unions are not a positive force for injured workers within the work environment. This is something I need to be aware of as many of my participants work in unionized environments and my personal response to any perceived lack of support needs to be carefully examined.

My second presupposition is that even without support from senior management and a less than supportive union, I was a front line manager able to effect change and this is reflected
in my belief that a worker’s personal choices could positively impact the return to work outcome even without their employer’s support.

My third presupposition is that with creativity and effort a frontline manager can effect change that can result in better outcomes for injured workers. Again, this is my experience and I need to identify when a supervisor is not successful or presents as unfair to the worker, that I challenge my response and don’t push the participant to see that perhaps the supervisor was trying and they did not see it.

Small Business Owner

As a small business owner for over 18 years, the experience of working with a range of professionals and clients has provided me with a wealth of information as well as beliefs and values around how one should run their business. Although we were small, fewer than 50 employees at our largest, I operated from a firm belief that it is important to recognize all staff as professionals and that their experiences mattered to the overall success of the business. In situations where I pushed too hard or didn’t listen I learned the hard way that it can cost you wonderful employees. I think that I believed that all workers felt as I did about the company and would put their all (including overtime) into the success. Although workers did want it to be successful, I needed to recognize that their definition may not be the same as mine. This has been a hard lesson to learn and has unfortunately cost me over the years. I believe that I would and did listen to and accommodate many of our employees over the years, perhaps even more than others would recommend, but that was balanced by a belief that they would work harder for the company. This belief that if you treat someone well or fairly that you will see a corresponding response is part of my underlying approach to everything I do – that fairness, as
well as perseverance, creativity and continuing to push away at something makes it happen. Although I believe that I have been fair it is based on my perception only and does not always include listening as a critical piece when making “fair” decisions. Therefore, it has taken me many years to recognize that listening, actually listening, to employees can be more difficult than imagined. This is a hard thing for me to admit, since I believe that I am a good listener and that it is one of my strengths in rehabilitation counseling. I believe that this is something that many managers and employers struggle with and that the perceptions of injured workers are affected by this ability or lack of ability.

This leads to my fourth presupposition that those employers who don’t listen to their employees very well experience increased worker perceptions of unfairness and potential withdrawal or lower satisfaction.

Rehabilitation Counselor

I have been employed as a rehabilitation counselor, working with injured or ill workers and their employers, for over 20 years. As a counselor, I have been able to view all aspects, both positive and negative, of the return to work (RTW) process. Working in both large unionized and non-unionized businesses and small businesses provided me with a wide range of experiences that impact my expectation of both the injured worker and employer. Over the years I noticed that if a worker was treated fairly they seemed to RTW more successfully. I found that if an injured worker felt that they received fair treatment from both the organization through senior management commitment to RTW and clear policies and procedures that even if the outcome was not seen as fair the worker reported that the process felt fair. Additionally, experience of fair treatment from the injured worker’s supervisor evidenced through good communication, a
willingness to support modifications and other workplace accommodations appeared to lead to outcomes for the injured worker that was felt to be fair and more positive regardless of the actual outcome. In a large unionized hospital I was involved in an injured worker’s RTW process and found the front line supervisor was a barrier to the process, as he felt the treatment of the injured worker was unfair in relation to the other staff. That the injured worker was receiving “special treatment” limited the supervisor’s willingness to be creative or to support the RTW modifications in a fair-minded manner. In this situation, the employer (organization) stepped in to work with the supervisor and ultimately made the corporate decision to move the manager. The injured worker successfully returned to work. In working with this injured worker he reported that it was the organization’s belief in him and willingness to treat him fairly that made the experience much better than he anticipated and ultimately provided the outcome of RTW that he wanted. This demonstrated to me how the organization’s commitment to the RTW processes can positively impact the RTW outcome and built on my belief that RTW can be successful if there is organizational commitment and consistently applied corporate policies and procedures.

My fifth presupposition is assuming that policies and procedures will ensure the RTW experience is fair. This is something that I need to be aware of when interviewing participants. In fact, a number of organizations had policies and procedures for RTW and corporate profiles that supported RTW and yet the participant was either not aware of them or felt that they were not applied consistently. The fact that an organization has policies and procedures is not a guarantee that injured workers will perceive them to be beneficial. Some workers found that the inconsistent application resulted in perceptions of unfair treatment and the decision to leave the organization. This was noted in part-time or casual workers more than in full-time workers.
Working with the front line supervisor and occupational health nurse in a medium sized company provided me with a number of positive experiences around how consistent and fair treatment of injured workers resulted in positive outcomes. Comments by the injured workers in this organization were positive and reflected the support they felt they received. I was brought in early into the process and helped to develop accommodations that the employer and worker both supported, resulting in RTW. One worker had experienced a “flare up” of his symptoms, and the employer was willing to provide time off to attend treatment and to slow the program down to address the concerns of the worker. The worker reported to me that he had worked for another company and they would not have provided time off at all for any type of injury. The worker stressed how happy he was with the employer and his treatment. The worker also felt that the use of an outside consultant was a positive support by the employer and demonstrated commitment to his successful RTW. Similarly, I worked with an injured worker who had originally reported to me how well he felt he had been treated, particularly since his wife had gone through a RTW that was perceived as much more unpleasant and in her opinion extremely unfair. He reported to me that his wife had to RTW due to personal financial reasons but that she was not going to be participating in work related activities or workplace community events. So even though his wife did RTW, her perceptions of unfairness led to her withdrawal from the organization. In his own RTW situation, this man felt that he had received a great deal of support and fair treatment in the early part of the RTW process. However, as the RTW date came closer he found that he was not getting communication from his supervisor or the HR team as to where he would be assigned or what his actual RTW plan would look like. His experience began to change and he started to report how he felt that it was unfair and wrong that the supervisor could not take time to speak to him about his assignment. In the end, management determined that
they would not return the worker to his original team as he had been led to believe, and he was assigned to an alternate team and work schedule. He reported to me that he was devastated and that the treatment he received had resulted in significant increase in symptoms, resulting in his decision to not RTW. This experience demonstrated to me how the experience of the worker can change depending on the type of treatment received, regardless of the other types of support in place. These examples show both the positive and negative impact of perceived justice at both the organizational and supervisor level, fueling my interest in learning more about the role of justice and RTW.

I realized that I do not often see the “good” cases as the majority of injured worker’s RTW quickly and without intervention with only approximately 10 percent of workers being off longer than 6 months. The injured workers that I often work with are either “chronic” in nature or there is a potential barrier that has impacted the worker’s RTW and I am part of the team to assist them in achieving a successful RTW outcome. This has provided me with a thorough knowledge of the legislation and the rights and responsibilities of the employer, union and injured worker in the RTW process.

This leads to my sixth presupposition, where my knowledge of the legislation and the RTW process with accompanying rules and processes can be a factor to consider during the interview process. I need to be aware that the participant may not know about certain legislation and their rights and that this is not my role in the interview. I am not there as an expert in the field, but rather as an observer of their experience.

My final presupposition is that despite the knowledge that my clients are not always viewed in a positive light, I believe that the majority of injured workers do want to RTW and that given the right support and fair treatment that they will be successful. This is one of my core
values and can lead me to view workers through a “lens” that may be as some call it “rose-colored”.

**Bracketing and Data Collection**

Creating a “decision trail” (Jooten et al, 2009) provides steps for introducing the participant to the research process. The participant is informed about the nature of the research, assured anonymity through pseudonyms and then invited to describe their situation to create a relationship of trust. In preparing for my research I felt that my experience as a rehabilitation counselor provided me with a way to build a rapport with the participants. One of the strategies I use to develop rapport is to ask the injured worker to describe their situation and their illness or injury and its impact on their ability to work. This technique provides the opportunity for the participant to share their story and to feel “heard”. In all cases, I believed that this would allow the participant a format where their injuries or illness could be confirmed as valid and that this would open the discussion instead of stalling it if the participant felt they needed to rationalize their situation. This also helped to create a level of trust between the participant and me as the researcher.

**Results of Bracketing on my role as a Researcher**

For each interview I prepared by thinking about my presuppositions and how they might impact this particular interview. Following the interview I listened to the interview and made notes in my journal. I was able to highlight areas that I wanted to improve or explore in further interviews. Through my interviews I was challenged to remain neutral or impartial and to reflect on my personal biases and where they may be influencing my responses or directing an interview. In one instance I found myself becoming angry at an employer since they were not
providing any accommodation for the participant and I could feel the tension rising in both my voice and body language. It became too difficult for me and I advised the participant that we could discuss the issue of accommodation after the interview. While saying that to the participant it was clear to me that I was violating my fifth presupposition. I spent a great deal of time reflecting on why I did this and realize that I like to “solve problems” and the fact that I had the knowledge of the legislative requirements meant I could solve this or at least provide additional information to the participant even though that was not my role and I did not prevent it from entering into and tainting some of the participant’s experience. In reflecting back I don’t believe that the participant felt that the employer action was an issue - they just accepted it as a fact. This provided me with a clear picture of why I needed to stay focused, and in subsequent interviews I was very aware of my role and was able to manage my emotions and need to “fix”.

In several interviews where the participant was experiencing difficulties in providing rich detail around their experiences I was aware of my need to potentially lead the interview with both closed and open-ended prompts around their treatment. Although I followed with questions to increase input and add more detail around an issue I did feel at times that I was leading the process more than naturally allowing for the participant to provide their details and own language. As a result of this, before each interview I would remind myself to work at not guiding the conversation and work to let the participant provide their own experiences and language.

Taking notes as well as reflecting before and after each interview provided me with an understanding of where I might need to focus for the upcoming interviews and limit the impact of my presuppositions. The last four interviews were much better and I was able to use more
open-ended questions to elicit detail and to obtain examples which helped to provide rich language and an understanding of the participants’ experience.

**Bracketing and Data Analysis**

As a researcher, I found that Hycner (1985) provided me with a process for data analysis that laid out the steps needed to stay true to a phenomenological approach while incorporating a level of rigor needed for my qualitative research project. Hycner (1985) found that many researchers don’t have a background in philosophical psychology and that he could provide at least one possible manner of phenomenologically analyzing data. While Georgi (1975) noted that a research method should arise out of trying to be responsive to a phenomenon, Hycner felt that providing an option on how to respond would be useful to the research community. Hycner laid out the following steps to consider as part of the analysis: transcribing the interview; listing your presuppositions; listening to the interview to gain meaning of the whole experience and to note/journal non-verbal and paralinguistic levels of communication; identifying units of general meaning and meaning then relevant to the research question; verifying meaning through the use of your supervisor and team; eliminating redundancies; clustering relevant meanings into themes and writing an individual summary; feedback to the participant on the themes and summary; modification of themes and summary based on feedback; identifying general and unique themes and finally contextualization of the themes. All through the research analysis it was critical to the process that I revisited my presuppositions and reflected on how they were impacting the individual analysis, themes and summary.
Conclusion

Conducting the Interview

Using the reflexive process of bracketing out my personal biases and issues allowed me to focus on what each participant’s experience was and the language that best reflected that experience. I was continually aware of how my perceptions, beliefs and suppositions could impact the experiences of the participant and hide the importance of fairness as a part of RTW. Using the strategies of listening to the interview, taking notes and reflecting before each subsequent interview was useful in trying to remove my biases and in letting the actual lived experience of the participant come through.

Conducting the Analysis

Following the outline provided by Hycner (1985) provided me with a mechanism to view each step in a way that was potentially unbiased. Initial analysis was difficult as I found myself not really looking at the words in the transcript or the language (verbal and non-verbal) used by the participant but rather focusing on what I wanted to see. Using reflection and reviewing the general and then more specific meanings as outlined under Hycner (1985) as part of the phenomenological approach allowed me to step back and really understand the “lived” experience of the participant individually and as a group. Reviewing the themes to consider how my biases around the role of the union or manager was helpful in ensuring that it was what the participant experienced and not just my beliefs. Reviewing the notes I had made between each interview and recognizing that at times I was still “leading” the interview or interjecting to “solve” problems helped me to be more aware of that in the final analysis of the experience(s) of the participants.

Returning to my original quote by De Vaalt (1997) “It seems important to consider what a personal element does in analysis and how it contributes to a larger process”
the use of reflection based on Hycner’s (1985) framework allowed me to examine both the interview process and the final analysis of data from a point of view that recognized my biases but ultimately in the final analysis helped to inform the themes raised by participants resulting in the best version of their combined “lived experience”.
References


Chapter 5

Abstract

Exploration of Perceived Organizational Justice with Injured Workers who have Participated in a Return to Work Program

Introduction: Perceived organizational justice is a psychosocial factor that impacts work outcomes for both healthy and injured workers; however, no study has examined how this phenomenon affects an injured worker during the return to work process. Objective: This study explored the lived experience of organizational justice by injured workers during the return to work process, identifying themes related to their perceptions of justice and how they impacted their return to work. Methods: A phenomenological approach was used to identify themes related to twelve injured workers’ experiences of justice throughout their return to work journey. Interviews were conducted with injured workers, transcribed, coded and thematically summarized. The summaries were then reviewed with the injured participants for any additional clarification and a final thematic summary was created. Results: The study revealed four major themes: including consistency of treatment of injured workers; accommodation equals fair treatment; outcomes of fair treatment; and support. Conclusions: The study is the first of its kind to explore injured workers’ experience of organizational justice during return to work, and provides insight in the role of organizational justice as a psychosocial factor to consider in understanding how to improve return to work outcomes. This research is significant, as it provides employers insight into an injured worker’s perceptions of organizational justice during return to work and identifies future training intervention strategies for employers for supervisors to improve return to work outcomes.
Introduction

Research into return to work (RTW) has experienced a paradigm shift over the past 10 years as it moved away from a bio-medical model to a bio-psychosocial approach (Schultz, Stowell, Feurnstein, & Gatchel, 2007; Laisne, Lecompte, Corbiere, 2012). The bio-psychosocial model is a complex systems approach in which stakeholders, and particularly the role of the individual, in RTW are stressed (Waddell, 1987). The bio-psychosocial model includes individual, workplace, economic and psycho-social factors which are considered as the genesis of disability and RTW processes (Franche, Cullen, Clarke, Irvin, Sinclair, Frank, & The Institute for Work & Health (IHW), 2005; MacEachen, Clarke, Franche, & Irwin, 2006; Haugli, Maeland, & Magnussen, 2011).

Psychosocial factors associated with perceived organizational justice (POJ) include job satisfaction, decision latitude, worker control, job demands, psychological demands, job stress or strain, trust and social support (Krause, Dasinger, Deegan, Rudolph, & Brand, 2001; Krause & Lund, 2004; Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, & Conlon, 2013). Extensive organizational justice research conducted over the past five decades has demonstrated that perceived organizational support (POS), trust and organizational fairness or POJ are psychosocial factors that are associated with outcomes such as health, sickness absence, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, leader-member exchange (LMX) and the intent to withdraw or leave from an organization (Colquitt et al. 2001; Cohen-Charest & Spector, 2001; Kimivaki, Ferrie, Brunner, Head, Shipley, Vahtera, & Marmot, 2005; Rai, 2013; Colquitt et al., 2013). More recent work by Hepburn, Kelloway, & Franche (2010b) has linked POJ, workplace-based (WB) strategies such as early contact and the offer of work accommodation and RTW outcomes such...
as duration of disability, affective commitment (defined as the workers’ feeling of connection to their organization) and enhanced mental health.

Organizational justice researchers have identified that justice is synonymous with fairness and respect within the workplace (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Initial research in organizational justice focused on examining the unique effects of the four different types of justice on a range of various outcomes (Colquitt et al., 2001; Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001). More recently the focus has shifted to a consideration of overall fairness judgments which could provide a more complete understanding of the role of justice in organizational settings (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). Overall, there has emerged an overarching construct based on overall fairness judgments that might be interpreted as “Global Fairness” which incorporates the various elements of the fairness domain. Figure 1 illustrates “Global Fairness” and the four independent but related justice types: procedural, distributive and interactional justice, with interactional justice consisting of informational justice and interpersonal justice. Distributive justice (DJ) deals with the fairness of outcomes (Adams, 1965; Leventhal, 1976). Procedural justice (PJ) deals with fairness of processes and decision control (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Leventhal, 1980). Finally, interactional justice (IJ) deals with the relationship between the supervisor and the worker and the fairness of the supervisor towards the worker (Bies & Moag, 1986). Colquitt et al. (2001) further defined IJ to include two factors informational and interpersonal or relational justice. Interpersonal justice identifies the presence or absence of explanations from managerial authority on new procedures. Interpersonal or relational justice identifies the degree of dignity and respect the worker receives from managerial authority.
Moving beyond healthy workers, within the organizational justice literature there is evidence linking POJ and sickness absence. High levels of POJ are associated with lower rates and frequency of sickness absenteeism (Kivimaki, Eloainio, Vahtera, & Ferrie, 2003; Eloainio et al., 2006; Eloainio, Kivimäki, Linna, Brockner, Van den Bos, & Greenberg, 2010; Ybema & Van den Bos, 2010). However, there is little research examining POJ and RTW. A recent scoping review (Larmour-Trode & Lysaght, 2014, unpublished) found that there is a large gap in the knowledge around POJ and RTW. POJ has been linked to claims decisions, length of time to claim; WB strategies such as early supervisor contact, and accommodation and RTW outcomes including duration, satisfaction and

**Figure 1: Organizational Justice**

![Organizational Justice Diagram](image)

As one of the main stakeholders in the RTW process, an injured worker’s experience of RTW provides an opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding around the factors that influence their actions and behaviors related to RTW. The worker’s experience of justice or fairness throughout the RTW process can add to the discussion, contributing additional knowledge around their perception of fairness, thereby expanding the dialogue and adding to the richness of material on RTW.

This research study utilized a qualitative approach to engage workers to gain their perspectives on organizational justice through the experience of RTW, thereby providing a unique contribution to the literature on justice and RTW.

**Method**

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that offers the researcher a process by which to gather rich and descriptive data around the phenomenon of interest. It explores the “lived experience” of an individual in order to understand the social and psychological meaning of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). Giorgi (1975) stated that the aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon being studied, refraining from
using a pre-given framework while remaining true to the facts of the experience. Hycner (1999) stated that while guidelines are necessary for phenomenology, they should not impose a method to explore the phenomenon in question. Phenomenologists believe that the researcher cannot be detached from their own presuppositions (Groenwald, 2004). The acknowledgement of personal bias is known as bracketing. Bracketing beliefs enables the researcher to capture the rich descriptions of the participants’ lived experience of the phenomenon while acknowledging the role their beliefs have in the process.

The use of a phenomenological approach provides information about the phenomenon being studied and identifies themes that are important to the research area but not well understood. The intent is to understand the phenomena in the participant’s own terms, thereby providing a description of their human experience (Groenwald, 2004).

**Participants**

Participants were recruited from a RTW rehabilitation organization in Ontario with which the author had an affiliation. Participants of all disability claim categories were considered eligible for the study. This allowed the researcher to explore the phenomenon broadly, inductively considering any themes that may arise from workers with different types of injuries. Convenience sampling was used to recruit the sample, as the author had access to a population that met the recruitment criteria. This use of non-probability sampling is applicable to qualitative inquiry (Lucas & Szatrowski, 2014) where the goal is to purposefully identify participants who can speak to the research questions. Participants were identified by the Office Manager of the clinic based on their reported participation in a RTW program in the past 6 months. Identified participants were contacted by the Office Manager of the clinic and provided basic information
as per a script (Appendix 1) and asked if they were interested in speaking to the researcher about the project. Participants who agreed to speak to the researcher provided verbal consent and gave the clinic their contact number or e-mail address. The researcher contacted interested participants to discuss the project and provided them information about the project. Once the participant reviewed the information, the researcher contacted them to determine if they would like to participate in the study. If the participant indicated he or she was willing to participate in the study they were provided a complete information package which included: a description and purpose of the research study; the research procedures; risks and benefits of participating; a description of the voluntary nature of the research participation; the procedures in place to protect their anonymity as a participant and confidentiality of the data collected; assurance of ethics clearance; and the researcher’s contact number and address (Appendix 1). To maintain anonymity and privacy relative to the employer, the Office Manager only gave the researcher the name and number of potentially interested workers. Interviews were scheduled once the worker returned the signed consent and participants were advised that they could meet in a suitable location for them (the clinic, via telephone or at a site outside of the participating clinic). All participants agreed to be interviewed on-site at the clinic. Follow up interviews were conducted by phone.

Data Collection

Data collection was based on two interviews with each informant. The first interviews ranged from 30 – 60 minutes in duration with the follow up interview conducted by phone and averaging less than 30 minutes. Initial interviews followed a semi-structured, in-depth interview approach with questions being directed to the injured worker’s feelings, experiences, beliefs, and
convictions about the phenomenon of organizational justice throughout the RTW process. The interview questions, outlined in the protocol in Appendix 1, were used to draw out participant examples of how they felt they were treated by the organization/occupational health personnel, their supervisor and co-workers during the RTW process. A second follow up interview was held to further refine thoughts and details of the experience discussed in the first interview as well as to prompt further ideas. To enhance participant feedback in the second interview, they were provided with their original transcript and interview summary prior to the interview.

Additional descriptive data were collected for each participant. Age, occupation, length of time in position/with employer, level of education, type and severity of injury, first injury occurrence, current RTW status (at work in own occupation with no limitations, at work in own occupation with limitations, at work in alternate occupation (with or without limitations), not at work, (if not at work – if they anticipate another RTW attempt) were gathered for each participant. Additional experiences with alternate employers were also included in the discussion if considered relevant by the worker. Worker experiences of negative or positive organizational justice emerged from the interviews and were included as part of the final analysis.

Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. All recorded information was transcribed so that the exact words used by the worker were analyzed. After each interview notes were made by the researcher that highlighted specific comments, observations (including facial and body actions), and details that added to the accuracy of the data collection. The use of detailed notes provides a tool to minimize potential interviewer bias and to aid in recall when reviewing or listening to the audiotaped recordings (Hycner, 1999).

The study participants were recruited from December 2011 until May 2013 when a total of 12 interviews were completed. Table 1 at the end of this paper provides a description of all
participants and the occupations that they discussed in their interview. Several participants had two part-time jobs or drew on previous experiences in the interview. These were included in the final analysis and detailed in the table. Analysis determined that saturation had been achieved when the last two interviews did not provide any new or unique information to the study. Most phenomenological studies require anywhere from 3 – 15 subjects to ensure sufficient quality and detail in the data collected (Creswell, 1998; Boyd, 2001) and quality over quantity is stressed. The project was aiming for the highest number of participants to ensure a strong pool of subjects and to address the potential of participant attrition between the first and second follow up interview. The participating clinic provides rehabilitation services to injured workers and thus it was anticipated that a pool of roughly 100 or more potential participants (involved in a RTW program in the past six months) was available throughout the recruitment period with the final 12 participants selected from that pool. Participants were provided with a $25 gift certificate from Chapters Book Store to cover their time spent participating in the study.

Trustworthiness of the Data

The data were examined using a framework initially developed by Hycner (1985). Hycner developed a series of step by step procedures for analyzing phenomenological data based on years of teaching phenomenological research and experience in phenomenological research. Hycner (1999) stated that it is difficult in a pure phenomenological study to have a series of rigorous steps similar to those required for quantitative studies as it will do great injustice to the integrity of the phenomenon under study. Hycner’s guidelines allow the researcher to present the data, being true to the phenomenon while still providing a structure that the reader can follow to determine if the data analysis is credible and the process transparent.
Data Analysis

The data analysis process began with transcription of interviews by a transcriptionist, followed by review and editing by the researcher to ensure accuracy. The researcher then engaged in a bracketing process in an effort to suspend beliefs and remain open to the experience of the phenomenon for the participant (see Chapter 4); listening to the interview as a whole and multiple reads of the transcripts to begin to develop a context for emergence of specific units of meaning or codes (see Appendix 1) and initial themes. The researcher then delineated units of general meaning staying close to the literal words of the participant; followed by breaking down units of meaning or codes specific to the research question and finally summarizing the interview by incorporating the themes drawn from the final codes. This allowed the researcher to provide a sense of the “whole” as well as a context for themes. The transcript and summary was reviewed with the participant to ensure they agreed with the essence of the initial interview and summary, making any relevant changes. The final stage involved writing a composite summary of all the interviews, which accurately captured the essence of the phenomenon under study. The thematic summary is intended to describe the “world” in general as experienced by the participants.

Significant differences were noted in the final summary.

Validity checking or trustworthiness (Hycner, 1985) has been defined as “a method of allowing for clarification or modification of points or ideas” and starts with the participant, researcher and finally, the research team. As much of the process is subjective, the researcher’s advisory committee discussed and reviewed the researcher’s bracketed suppositions, and units of meaning (general and research specific). Units of meaning and themes were then brought back to the participants in a second follow up interview/meeting. One method of establishing reliability
of data collected and analyzed in a phenomenological study is the use of triangulation. In this study, the researcher’s supervisor provided a form of triangulation as each conducted their own reviews of the data summaries, themes, and compared impressions to determine if common interpretations exist.

Member checking allows for clarification or modification of points or ideas with the subject(s) as well as to determine whether the interview and analysis are correct or valid from the point of view of the subject. Member checking with subjects did not result in any changes to the final coding and thematic analysis.

Findings

The findings showed that injured workers gather information from several different sources to make their decisions around fairness. Some of the places they gathered information was from the experiences of other injured workers, other organizations, their interaction with their supervisor and co-workers and their own previous experiences of fair treatment either with the current employer or from past employment. Justice was expressed by workers as both a positive and negative experience, and feelings of justice were clearly tied to attitudes and behaviors towards their employers. Four main themes arose from the justice experiences of the 12 injured workers who were involved with a return to work program. The themes were: consistency of treatment of injured workers; accommodation equals fair treatment which included 2 subthemes: recognition of injured worker effort and respecting limitations; outcomes of fair treatment which included 3 subthemes: satisfaction with the RTW experience, commitment to my company and intending to leave my job. This theme was further explored with intensity of
negative experience leading to the decision to leave an organization. The final theme was support and how that relates to the experience of justice for these workers.

Consistency of treatment of injured workers

Participants talked about their experiences around consistency of treatment from both a positive and negative lens. Workers who reported a positive experience of fair treatment told the author that they were able to see examples of how other workers were treated and that that made them feel that they could also expect the same treatment. Several workers described how they had seen workers with injuries being offered an accommodation such as being provided a desk, a truck with an automatic transmission so that the worker would not have to use his damaged knee or an in-office alternate job that would allow the worker to remain at work. Participant Five shared his experience that “all workers are treated the same, with one guy hurting his back and he was the same way as me and they gave him a desk job and brought everything to him” and “we have on other gentleman right now that went off the back of his truck and the (power) walker came down on his leg and he is sitting at a desk and hasn’t lost any time.” Participant Two shared that the organization wanted feedback on how the workers felt that they were treated during their RTW and she told the author that she felt respected and that the organization treated all injured workers the same to help them RTW. She said “as a company they’re very much into treating people with respect and treating them well” She then went on to share that the organization has corporate policies that they use to get feedback from all workers including those off due to an injury “anonymous surveys and they all rate different things ...you know.. like how do you feel you are treated by the workplace?” Workers who reported a positive experience shared that they felt “respected 100 percent”.

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Workers who reported that they felt that their experience of justice was negative also talked about the consistency of treatment. They found that workers were often treated differently, with several talking about seeing workers who were full-time employees or who had a work-related injury being provided with different levels of treatment than injured workers who were part-time or had non-work related injuries. The participants explained that this was not fair and that it told them that they, too, may not be treated fairly. Some workers also used the different treatment to demonstrate that the employer was not consistently applying policies and procedures or offering accommodations to workers. These inconsistencies influenced their response to the employer and if they felt treated fairly. One participant reported that “I saw how others were treated and I too was treated badly” and Participant Ten shared that she had noticed that “modified duties were allocated differently across the organization”. Participant Nine described how “there is another new staff, one who has gone on disability and she’s tried to go back but has now put in for a transfer.”

**Accommodation**

The second theme that emerged was accommodation and perceptions of justice. Participants described the provision of accommodations as a way of telling the author that they felt treated fairly. The decision to provide or not provide an accommodation was reported as either fair or not fair by many of the study participants. Participants who felt that the accommodation was fair shared their stories including Participant Five who said “work sent me down an automatic truck so I didn’t have to clutch on the way home.” He also shared that his employer offered him an alternate job in the office until he was able to return to his own job as a truck driver. Participant Six also shared that he received accommodations for work and that he
felt was accommodated and able to modify his duties, reporting that the company scored a “9 out of 10” for fair treatment.

Workers who did not receive an accommodation also felt that this reflected a lack of respect from the organization and they reported more feelings of unfairness. Participants shared that they were told they could be accommodated but then they weren’t, and this made them feel terrible. Participant Ten described being told to come back to work as the organization had modified work for her, but when she arrived there was no one there to provide job duties. She felt disrespected and treated unfairly. She said “nothing in place for me I just...I just stood there for four hours” and then went on to say that she did not feel the organization treated her fairly.

**Recognition of Hard Work:** A subtheme that emerged from accommodation and justice comments was how workers felt that it was really important that the organization recognize their hard work. This was only represented as important to workers who had received an accommodation, felt treated fairly and stated that the loyalty or hard work was important to be recognized. Workers with negative experiences of justice and RTW did not share those sentiments. Several workers tied the feeling of being recognized as loyal and hardworking back to being provided an accommodation. Participant Two directly linked accommodation to being a good worker and subsequently to the experience of fairness with her employer “if you are a good worker then you are accommodated more easily if you are injured.” The participant told the author that when she returned to work the employer told her to take get up and move around if she needed to change position and she reported she was treated fairly and with respect.
Recognition of Limitations: The final subtheme under accommodation is the recognition of limitations and how that is also related back to perceptions of fair treatment by this group of injured workers. The majority of workers described the fact that their limitations were ignored and that they felt disrespected by the supervisor and organization. One worker detailed how his restrictions were completely disregarded by the employer. These workers tied the idea that the organization did not recognize their limitations as examples of poor and unfair treatment. Participant Three reported that he believed he was treated very unfairly as the employer was aware of the restrictions and simply ignored them and asked the worker if he would be back at work on Thursday. The participant said “it was completely disregarded and…you know…get back to work. (Interviewer) not a lot of respect and the participant responded no not at this point.”

Outcomes of Fair Treatment

For all of the workers, the discussion of fairness revolved around if they were interested in staying with the organization or intending to leave. There were three subthemes, satisfaction, commitment and intending to leave, under outcomes for this group of injured workers.

Satisfaction: Satisfaction for these workers was tied to fair treatment based on the areas discussed in previous themes with those workers who shared that they had experienced injured workers being treated fairly, that their own accommodations and limitations were recognized by their employer, and that they felt recognized by the employer telling the author that they felt satisfied with how they were treated and intended to stay with the organization. Satisfaction was
very strong in these workers, with several stating that they were “100 percent satisfied with how I was treated” and “absolutely satisfied – I would not receive any better treatment from my family. This company is awesome.”

**Commitment:** Workers shared that they “loved their job” and “enjoy coming to work for this company and that is fantastic to come to a job you enjoy.” Again these workers shared these feelings of affection towards their job often after describing how they had seen others treated the same and that they felt that they had received accommodations from their employer that respected their limitations.

**Intent to Leave my Job:** The group of injured workers (Participants Three, Seven, Eight, and Nine) who told the author that they were actively looking for a new job or had left a job were driven out by the negative experience of justice. This group reported more negative experiences than either of the two other groups (satisfaction and commitment). There was one participant who wanted to leave but had to stay due to financial reasons, but even she told the author that as soon as she found another job she left.

**Intensity of the Negative Experience:** It is difficult to discuss the feelings of unfairness and the worker’s decision to leave the organization without introducing the subtheme around the intensity of this experience. For this group of workers, they shared their stories about how they were treated and that they were going to leave using much stronger language and emotion than any of the workers who described positive, fair, experiences. Participants shared that they “couldn’t wait to leave”, that they felt ”betrayed by the organization and considered leaving as a result”. Even old experiences were drawn into the stories around today’s treatment for comparison. Negative experiences as long as five years ago were introduced as important to
share to this author and representing how badly they felt they were treated. One interesting part of their stories was that the negative experience came from their relationship with their supervisor. Participant Three shared that he did not want to talk to his supervisor and that he just wanted to “get my stuff done, get in my car and go home.” Participant Eight described a previous negative experience where her supervisor did not recognize her injury and treated her very unfairly. “I was the victim and made me feel like a criminal.” She shared that she stayed as long as she could but left as soon as she found her current job. The participant was so upset that she began to cry retelling her story.

Support

All of the participants talked about support in their interviews. Support was found through the actions and behaviors of the organization, supervisor and co-workers. Participant stories included both positive and negative experiences of support from their workplaces. Participants reported supervisor support as important to their perceptions of justice in all cases, with perceptions of organizational process being impacted both positively and negatively by actions and tone of the supervisor. The role of co-worker support was mentioned by all participants as a positive activity related to RTW, but was not discussed in relation to perceptions of justice. Some of the participants talked about the positive actions taken by their immediate supervisor as important sharing that they would often just “step up” and take the task on for the worker or tell the worker “to take as much time as you need” to get better or to ”get up and move around, bring a hot pack to work if you need it.” Participant Five shared how the employer helped get an appointment with a medical professional, then provided him with support around taking the days he needed to go to the appointment. Another participant (Ten) told the author
that her boss was great “like yesterday we were doing wholesale and she’d bring it out and put it on the cart and I would put it up because the boxes are just like dips and not heavy.”

Negative experiences of support also emerged from the participant stories. Participants shared that the actions of their employers did not make them feel valued or worthwhile to the organization. At least half of the workers told stories about how the supervisor did not call the worker to ask how they were doing or let them know when RTW meetings were scheduled. Supervisor responses were very important to this group and they told the author that when they did not get support it made them feel “almost betrayed” or “forgotten”. Once again the negative experiences of support were very strong. Finally, expressions of support from the workers were tied to expressions of justice with some of the workers’ stating that they felt both unfairly treated and unsupported by their supervisor.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to gain a deep understanding of the lived experience of justice from an injured worker’s perspective during RTW. The four main themes and associated subthemes explore the meaning of justice and RTW and tell the stories of the 12 injured workers. It is important to examine these stories to establish what links to justice theory and RTW may emerge. The first theme of consistency of treatment is informative, as it helps to identify the way that these injured workers examine information from different sources and integrate it into global justice perceptions. Consistency was defined by these workers as relevant to them if they were able to see how other workers were treated by their organization, supervisor and other organizations. If the workers felt that the organization and/or supervisor treated all injured workers the same they told the author that they expected to be treated the same as well and
indicated that this was fair. Consistency of treatment within justice can be described as equality, an allocation norm (distributive justice) where workers are treated the same with rewards being used by their organization or supervisor to direct an individual’s efforts towards the fulfillment of the group’s goals such as solidarity and harmony (Leventhal, 1976). This could be seen when injured workers observed their supervisor/organization or another organization provide accommodations to a worker or themselves so that the supervisor moved the group forward towards the organizations’ goals.

Participants reported that receiving an accommodation meant that they believed that they were treated fairly. Accommodation for these workers meant being provided with a new truck, new desk, modified duties, such as being able to leave early, or alternate duties. Further examination of accommodation and why it was equated with fair treatment led to the discussion of effort and loyalty. As noted above, participants shared that they felt that employers who recognized their effort and loyalty to the company would reward that good work with an offer of accommodation. Effort and recognition of the participant’s hard work is described within the justice literature as an equity allocation norm (Leventhal, 1976). Adams (1965) showed that people are concerned not so much about an outcome, but rather if that outcome is perceived to be fair. One way of determining if an outcome is fair is to calculate the ratio of one’s input or contributions to one’s outcome and then to compare that ratio to others, and that appraisal is defined within organizational literature as distributive justice. The concept that distributive fairness can explain the relationship between work effort and the provision of an accommodation is one that needs further exploration. A second subtheme emerged with the workers sharing that when their supervisors demonstrated that they recognized the worker’s limitation(s) this confirmed their feelings of being treated fairly. Findings by Hepburn et al. (2010b) supported
further investigation of the quality and tone of the interaction with the supervisor as important in understanding how injured or ill workers perceive justice. Roberts and Markel (2001) also found that the quality of the supervisor relationship was linked to whether an injured worker would submit a claim for compensation. This phenomenological study builds on this concept that the quality of the relationship between the injured worker and supervisor is important to an injured worker’s perceptions of justice. If a participant felt that he or she was respected by the supervisor, they reported that the supervisor would follow the provided limitations and offer accommodations. Workers shared that both the tone of the interaction and the actions of the supervisor were important to them. Workers who reported that both supervisor tone and interaction were positive felt that their efforts within the organization were recognized and that they were respected. Supervisor respect is defined as part of interpersonal justice where the supervisor interactions with the worker are found to be polite, respectful and that they treat a worker with dignity (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Participants explained how RTW outcomes, including satisfaction with their job and RTW experience, commitment to their organization and the decision to leave an organization were impacted by their experience of fairness throughout their RTW program. Job satisfaction was described by the participants as a positive RTW outcome, derived from their perception of a fair RTW experience. Job satisfaction is strongly and positively related to POJ in the organizational literature with workers reporting that when they are treated well by their organization and supervisor they are happier with the results of a process (Colquitt et al., 2001; Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Rai, 2013). The subtheme “commitment” was defined by the participants as feeling emotionally connected to their organization as a result of their fair treatment. Organizational commitment is strongly and positively related to POJ as well in the
organizational justice literature (Colquitt et al., 2001; Colquitt et al., 2013; Rai, 2013). Most measures of commitment discuss affective commitment which is defined as the degree to which workers identify with the organization and their goals (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Finally, the decision by the injured workers to leave their job was defined by their negative experiences of justice. A third RTW outcome subtheme involved the worker’s decision to think about leaving an organization and is known as “intent to withdraw” within the organizational justice literature (Colquitt et al., 2001). Withdrawal behaviors and intentions include absenteeism, turnover and neglect and are found to be moderately and negatively related to justice (Colquitt et al., 2013; Rai, 2013).

The final theme, support, emerged through all of the participants’ experiences. Support was described by the participants as actions and behaviors by supervisors and organizations that affected their experience of fairness throughout the RTW process. Supportive actions by the supervisor or organization included valuing the worker through early contacts to ask how they are doing, providing information about meetings and relief from work tasks. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa (1986) found that perceived organizational support (POS) reflects the degree to which the organization and supervisor is perceived to value the employee’s contributions and well-being. POS has been shown as both a mediator and moderator of justice as POJ can be both an antecedent and outcome variable (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002; Ambrose & Schminke, 2003; Loisel, Buchbinder, Hazard, Keller, Scheel, & van Tulder, 2005; Loi, Hang-yue, & dan Foley, 2006; Cho & Treadway, 2011; Ohana, 2012; Rai, 2013).

The story of these injured workers tells us how they perceived justice throughout their RTW experience. The participants look for information that demonstrates how other injured workers are treated by their organization and supervisor and use that to evaluate their overall
experience of justice. The injured workers shared that the supervisor’s recognition of limitations and provision of accommodations, indicated to them that they were being treated fairly. The injured workers appeared to tie the acceptance of injury and offer of accommodation by their supervisor, to the workers’ previous work for the organization and the belief that they are “hard workers and loyal”. This is a unique finding, as the current work in accommodation and POJ has focused on co-worker’s perceptions of justice around an injured worker’s accommodation and whether they will support that worker (Colella, 2001; Colella et al., 2004; Nichols, 2008; Paetzold et al., 2008; Carpenter & Paetzold, 2013; Dunstan & MacEachen, 2013). The injured workers further discussed that their experiences of justice helped to inform their opinions and behaviors about their organization or supervisor. Interpersonal and informational justice both address how the supervisor provides information to the worker and may provide additional knowledge around how that sharing of material influences an injured worker and their experience of RTW. The workers with positive experiences of justice reported that they were satisfied and felt more emotionally committed to their organization as a result of their RTW process. However, the injured workers whose experiences were negative reported that they would be either leaving their organization or had left their job at the time of the interview. They also described their experience of fairness in extremely negative terms, using stronger language and expressing their anger and frustration through physical responses such as crying. These negative experiences of justice did not need to be recent to provoke the intensity of reaction with one report being up to five years before the interview. These outcomes are consistent with the research in the justice field (Colquitt et al., 2013; Rai, 2013) and additional study on how strong the relationship is between the experience of justice and outcomes for injured workers would be beneficial. Finally, perceptions of support (POS), particularly supervisor support was important.
to these workers. Supervisor support enhanced the experience of fairness in all workers’ stories more than either co-worker or family support. Therefore, even though the injured workers talked about different types of support, supervisor support was the most consistent type of support mentioned by the participants when discussing justice in their RTW experience. Within the justice literature, POS has been found to be both a moderator and mediator of justice, for workers and any future justice and RTW research should include POS.

**Limitations**

One limitation of this phenomenological study is the use of convenience sampling, which provided good access to the study population, but introduced potential bias such that certain types of participants may have been excluded. Those workers that were not referred to the clinic or unable to afford private healthcare were not included in the sample which might have resulted in the exclusion of certain unique perspectives. Convenience sampling is also non-probabilistic and does not allow for results to be generalizable to the broader population (Lucas & Szatrowski, 2014). This concern was addressed through efforts to provide a clear description and enough detailed information on the subjects such that future researchers would be in a better position to make their own transferable judgments.

As the researcher is an integral part of the interview, there is the potential for personal bias to influence the direction of the interview and thematic analysis. The use of reflexivity was used to allow the researcher to systematically minimize their influence through bracketing (Hycner, 1999). Finally, the interview process was reviewed by the author and reshaped after each interview however the use of pilot interviews may enhance the quality of the initial participant interviews (Sin, 2010).
Practical Implications

Although, the findings from this study represent the experiences of 12 injured workers, there are a number of areas that employers may want to consider when examining their disability management program. These injured workers consistently reported that the tone and quality of the interactions with their supervisor were very important in their perceptions of justice and subsequent behaviors. Training for supervisors that includes both a good knowledge of the organization’s policies and procedures and how to provide that information to injured workers may be one step that an employer could use to assist injured workers so that they are able to return to work or remain at work. Understanding that consistency matters to these injured workers, an employer might want to review and develop disability management policies and procedures that address, occupational and non-occupational injuries or illnesses, in a similar manner. Overall, the story of these injured workers provides a number of practical considerations for employers wanting to improve return to work outcomes.

Conclusion

The results of this phenomenological study are unique to both the justice and RTW literature. This study identified themes that emerged from 12 injured workers who were all engaged in a RTW program. These themes highlight aspects of fairness found in the organizational justice and RTW literature and further exploration of these constructs is required to better understand the role of fairness in RTW. Although the lived experience of 12 injured workers does not allow us to generalize findings, they do allow for a deeper understanding of how justice impacts the RTW of injured workers. This study offers a glimpse into the experience of justice and RTW and offers up emergent themes that should be explored further.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Injury</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Lost Time (days)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BEd/University</td>
<td>WAD 2 soft tissue (MVA)</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>School Board (large public employer with Union)</td>
<td>3 rtw full time at time of interview</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Customer</td>
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<td>3 rtw part-time regular hours at time of interview</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>College/1 year</td>
<td>WAD 1 soft tissue (MVA)</td>
<td>Customer</td>
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<td>1 rtw full time with no modification at time of interview</td>
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<td>Low Back soft tissue and numbness in index finger/thumb (MVA)</td>
<td>Server</td>
<td>Restaurant (small private family business no union)</td>
<td>20 still on modified hours and duties at time of interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Real Estate Salesperson</td>
<td>Real Estate Company (small private family business with no union)</td>
<td>20 days rtw at time of interview</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>College course /1 year</td>
<td>WAD 1 and left shoulder soft tissue (MVA)</td>
<td>Server</td>
<td>Restaurant (small private employer)</td>
<td>3 days rtw full time with restrictions at time of interview</td>
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<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Injury Description</td>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Status</td>
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<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>Orthopaedic injury to left knee – surgery to repair</td>
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<td>Truck Driver Transport</td>
<td>No lost time as employer modified duties (currently on modified duties at time of interview)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Right hand and foot soft tissue (MVA)</td>
<td>Airplane manufacturer (large private employer with union)</td>
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<td>RTW against medical advice after STD (16 weeks) as employer terminated client</td>
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<td>L4-L5 herniated discs (MVA)</td>
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<td>8-9 weeks off work, RTW modified duties at time of interview</td>
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<td>College 3 years</td>
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<td>RN</td>
<td>2 days</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Large private community nursing company (with no union)</td>
<td>Community RN</td>
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<td>College 3.5 years</td>
<td>WAD and left shoulder soft tissue</td>
<td>Liquor store (Large public employer)</td>
<td>Customer Service Worker</td>
<td>4 months, then attempted RTW over summer, off</td>
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<td>Case</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Injury</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with bone chip/fracture (MVA)</td>
<td>Retail Sales</td>
<td>Small Retail Store (no union)</td>
<td>work September, now not at work</td>
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<td>1 year College</td>
<td>Low Back Injury soft tissue (WSIB)</td>
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<td>Large private grocer (with union)</td>
<td>1 week</td>
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<td>Not employer with WSIB claim</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Large private grocer</td>
<td>Had not RTW at time of interview due to restrictions</td>
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<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>Right foot injury – soft tissue (WSIB)</td>
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<td>Large private retail company (no union)</td>
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<td>Large sports venue (no union)</td>
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<td>Same issue but re-aggravated at new employer (WSIB)</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Large private retail (no union)</td>
<td>No lost time as employer accommodated</td>
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References


Chapter 6

Abstract

Relationship between Injured Workers’ Perceived Organizational Justice, Perceived Organizational Support and Return to Work Outcomes: Do Perceptions of Fairness and Support Influence Return to Work?

Introduction: Workplace injuries cost Canadian workers and employers millions of dollars in lost time every year. Understanding factors that contribute to improved return to work (RTW) outcomes is a significant focus for RTW research. Psychosocial factors such as organizational support have been linked to improved RTW outcomes while organizational justice has been overlooked in the RTW research. Objective: This study examined injured workers’ perceptions of organizational justice (POJ), perceptions of organizational support (POS) and RTW outcomes including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to withdraw and duration of work absence. Methods: 47 injured workers who were involved in a RTW process were recruited through 5 physiotherapy clinics in Ontario. The injured workers completed the Organizational Justice Survey (Colquitt et al., 2001); the Support for Workers with Disability Scale (Lysaght et al., 2012); a modified Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham, 1974); a modified version of the Organizational Commitment Scale (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993); and a modified version of the Turnover Intention Scale (Hanish & Hulin). Correlational analysis and hierarchical regression analysis were computed on the survey data. Results: The results revealed that justice is positively correlated with job satisfaction, affective commitment and support, while being negatively correlated with intent to withdraw. Justice had no correlation with continuance commitment or duration. Support was positively correlated with job satisfaction and...
affective commitment, but not correlated with continuance commitment, intent to withdraw or duration. Support mediates the effect of justice on job satisfaction and affective commitment. Justice accounts for ten percent of the variance in intent to withdraw. Conclusions: This study is the first to examine how perceptions of justice impact an injured worker’s decisions and behaviors throughout the RTW process and ultimately their outcomes of RTW.

Introduction

Sickness and injuries cost Canadian workers and employers millions of dollars each year in lost time. The role of physical and psychosocial factors in understanding this complex and multifaceted issue has dominated research in the field of return to work (RTW) for the past 15 years (Friesen, Yassi, & Cooper, 2001; Kirsh & McKee, 2003; Franche, Cullen, Clarke, Irwin, Sinclair, Frank, & The Institute for Work & Health (IHW), 2005; MacEachen, Clarke, Franche, & Irwin, 2006; MacDermid, Geldart, Williams, Westmorland, Lin, & Shannon, 2008; Briand, Durand, St-Arnaud, & Corbiere, 2008; Tjulin, MacEachen, & Ekberg, 2010; Nastasia, Coutu, & Tcaciuc, 2014; Pelissier, Fontana, & Chauvin, 2014; Besen, Young, & Shaw, 2015). With the advent of a bio-psychosocial approach some years ago, the role of psychosocial factors and their contribution to RTW outcomes has been identified as significant to the discussion of what contributes to a successful RTW. MacEachen et al. (2006) found that RTW extends beyond the concerns about physical factors to the complexities related to the roles, beliefs and perceptions of the many parties involved in RTW.

Additional psychosocial factors including job satisfaction, decision-making, job control, skill discretion, physical and psychological demands, social support and respect have emerged as impacting RTW outcomes (Krause, Frank, Dasinger, Sullivan, & Sinclair, 2001; Krause &
Lund, 2004; Huang, Shaw, & Chen, 2004). Support, respect and trust are all factors that have been linked to fairness in the organizational literature (Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001, Colquitt, Scott, Rodell, Long, Zapata, & Conlon, 2013). As a psychosocial factor, perception of organizational justice (POJ) has had minimal examination relative to injured workers and their decisions around RTW (Hepburn, Franche, & Francis, 2010a). Understanding the relationship between POJ and return to work will add to the knowledge around an injured worker’s decision to return to work.

**Organizational Justice**

POJ consists of 4 empirically distinct constructs: procedural, distributive, interpersonal and informational justice (Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Distributive justice reflects the perceived fairness of decision outcomes, especially the degree to which outcomes are seen as equitable (Adams, 1965; Leventhal, 1976). The second construct, procedural justice, refers to the perceived fairness of decision making processes and the degree to which they are considered consistent, accurate, unbiased and open to voice and input (Thibault & Walker, 1975; Leventhal, 1980). A third dimension introduced by Bies and Moag (1986) known as interactional justice defines the perceived fairness of the enactment and implementation of fairness decisions. Further to interactional justice, Colquitt et al. (2001) defined interpersonal justice as the respectfulness and propriety of communications while informational justice refers to the truthfulness and adequacy of explanations. Global justice consists of the 4 individual justice dimensions. Recent research has included the global construct and stated that it represents a fairness shortcut to make decisions (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009) particularly in stressful situations. In the context of RTW, for example, injured workers may
perceive their situation to be stressful and uncertain and therefore they would rely on previous justice experiences to make decisions. Fairness Heuristic Theory (Lind 2001; Van den Bos, 2001) suggests that in times of uncertainty or stress, justice relevant information is used by the worker to develop justice judgments and guide subsequent work-related decisions. Justice is therefore considered stable and enduring based on the premise of a shortcut being established (Lind, 2001).

**POJ and Outcomes**

Examining the extensive research on POJ demonstrates that justice is a predictor of a range of outcomes for healthy workers. Two large meta-analytic reviews, a review of reviews and several recent studies provide strong evidence that job satisfaction, intent to withdraw or leave an organization and organizational commitment are correlated with POJ (Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Nowakowski & Conlon, 2005; Rai, 2013; Colquitt et al., 2013). These findings relate to justice decisions in general and further consideration of POJ and its impact in a RTW context is merited.

Job satisfaction defined as “the worker enjoys their job”, is one of the most thoroughly studied outcomes in POJ research, with several reviews and studies reporting strong positive relationships between distributive, procedural and interactional (interpersonal and informational) justice and job satisfaction (Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Chang & Dubinsky, 2005; Rai, 2013) Job satisfaction is strongly correlated with both procedural and distributive justice and moderately correlated with both informational and interpersonal justice (Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001).
Organizational commitment is studied in relationship to POJ, with most of the studies reporting on affective commitment which is defined as the degree to which the worker identifies with the company and makes the company’s goals their own (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The results of the large justice reviews (Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Nowakowski & Conlon, 2005) and additional studies (Colquitt et al., 2013; Rai, 2013) done since then, report significant and positive relationships with all types of justice and organizational/affective commitment. Organizational commitment is strongly related to procedural and distributive justice, but moderately related to interactional justice (Colquitt et al., 2001). However, Charesh-Cohen & Spector (2001) found that affective commitment was more strongly related to procedural justice and to a lesser degree related to both distributive justice and interactional justice.

All four types of POJ are moderately and negatively correlated with intent to withdraw which is defined as a worker’s thoughts about leaving an organization. Withdrawal thoughts and behaviors may include absenteeism, turnover and neglect (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Colquitt et al., 2001; Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Rai, 2013). Distributive and interpersonal justice are strongly related to intent to withdraw, with procedural justice being moderately related and informational justice being weakly linked to withdrawal intentions.

This study examined the relationships as proposed in Figure 1 between POJ, perception of support (POS) and RTW outcomes including job satisfaction in workers, organizational commitment (affective and continuance commitment), intent to withdraw and duration (number of days off work).
Organizational justice is strongly and significantly linked with job satisfaction so it would be expected that POJ would be positively correlated with job satisfaction for injured worker’s participating in a RTW program. Injured workers (IW) who perceive that they are treated fairly through consistent policies and procedures, polite and respectful relationships with their supervisors would be expected to feel satisfaction with their RTW process and outcome.

Figure 1: Relationships between Justice, Support and RTW Outcomes

As POJ is strongly correlated with organizational commitment in the general working population, particularly affective commitment, it is expected that injured workers who report fair RTW procedures and receive information about their RTW from polite, respectful supervisors
would feel more engaged and committed to the organization. Therefore, it is expected that injured workers’ POJ will be positively correlated with organizational commitment.

Organizational justice is moderately and negatively related to a worker’s intention to withdraw from the workplace in the context of non-disabled workers, therefore it is expected that an injured worker who does not experience fair treatment would be more willing to leave their organization and as such it is expected that intent to withdraw would be negatively correlated with POJ.

As workers with high levels of POJ are found to have a higher level of satisfaction and commitment to their jobs and less intent to withdraw or leave their organization, it is expected that they would be more engaged in the RTW process and that duration of time off work would be shorter. Therefore, it is expected that IW POJ would be negatively correlated with duration. Duration is defined as the length of time from the date of injury to RTW or the number of days off work at the time of completing the survey.

POJ is positively and significantly correlated with POS in healthy workers (Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Additionally, past research with non-disabled workers has demonstrated that POJ has been either partially or fully mediated or moderated by POS, a factor known to be linked to improved RTW (Aryee, Budwhar & Chen, 2002; Sullivan, Ward, Tripp, French, Adams, & Stanish, 2005; Loisel, Buchbinder, Hazard, Keller, Scheel, & van Tulder, 2005; Loi, Hang-yue, & dan Foley, 2006). IW POS is therefore expected to be positively correlated with IW POJ, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while negatively correlated with intent to withdraw and duration.
Hypothesis

The hypothesis proposed for POJ and RTW outcomes is:

Hypothesis 1: IW POJ within the context of RTW will be positively correlated with a) job satisfaction and b) organizational commitment and negatively correlated with c) intent to withdraw and d) number of days off work.

The hypothesis proposed for POS and the RTW outcomes is:

Hypothesis 2: IW POS within the context of RTW will be positively correlated with a) job satisfaction and b) organizational commitment and negatively correlated with c) intent to withdraw and d) number of days off work.

The hypothesis proposed to consider the relationship between POJ and POS is:

Hypothesis 3: IW POJ is positively correlated with IW POS.

Methodology

This section presents a description of the study participants, an overview of the survey instruments used, procedures for data collection and finally the methods of data analysis (means, standard deviations, correlations, regression analysis and mediation) utilized to answer the 3 hypothesis.

Participants

Participants were recruited through 5 physiotherapy clinics in the province of Ontario. The clinics are part of an organization that is a national physiotherapy provider. Clinics were
selected based on the volume of injured workers that they typically had at the clinic involved in treatment. Clinics recruited participants over three rounds and a final group of 47 workers completed the surveys. Participants were recruited if they had sustained an injury, either occupational or non-occupational, and were employed at the time of the injury within the province of Ontario, Canada.

Male respondents comprised 52.2 percent of the sample with female respondents being 45.7 percent and 1 person did not identify gender. The mean age was 45.6 with participants ranging from 25 to 68 years. On average participants had been employed for 11 years and had been off work for an average of 66 days (SD = 133). 14 percent of respondents had Grade 12 education, 16.7 percent had some technical training, 36 percent had college level training, 14 percent had completed university and 16.7 percent had graduate level education.

Procedure

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling. Participants were to the best of our knowledge involved in the return to work process and had been provided accommodations in the way of either modified hours, modified duties or were off work and thinking about a return to work. All procedures were cleared by the related university’s ethics review committee and participants provided their informed consent to have their data included in the study. Each clinic identified appropriate candidates and invited them to participate in the study. Once the candidate agreed they were provided with a package including the information sheet, consent form and surveys and asked to complete and return the sealed package to the clinic. The clinic forwarded the sealed surveys to the lead investigator and 55 packages were received. Out of the packages
received, 8 surveys were removed as they did not include consent forms, or if the worker indicated they were not involved in a RTW program.

**Measures**

**Covariates:** Participants reported on their age, education, gender and number of days off work. The covariates age, education, gender and days off were selected for inclusion in this study. Although previous POJ research (Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001) has reported that covariates do not correlate with POJ, Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001 recommended that covariates should be included in future studies for further exploration of their relation to POJ.

**Perceived Organizational Justice Scale:** POJ was measured through 20 items evaluating procedural, distributive and interactional (interpersonal and informational) justice. Participants indicated their level of agreement with each item on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) (α = .90). This POJ scale developed by Colquitt (2001) is a 20 item survey constructed to investigate the theoretical dimensionality of justice, with the best fit being the four-factor model (distributive, procedural, interpersonal and informational). Colquitt (2001) noted that survey items can be tailored to specific contexts such as return to work (RTW), while Greenberg (1993) suggested that a justice measure would require convertability to remain useful across different contexts, therefore all items were reviewed and modified to reflect a RTW context. Procedural justice is 7-items measuring the ability of an individual to voice their views and arguments during a procedure or process, to influence the outcome of the procedure and to compare the process on experiences to several generalizable procedural rules (consistency, bias suppression, accuracy of information, correctability and ethicality). Example
items are: “Have the RTW processes been applied consistently?” and “Have those processes been based on accurate information?” (original Colquitt, 2001 scale coefficient $\alpha = .89$).

Distributive justice is 4-items measuring the extent that an allocation of an outcome is consistent with the goals of a particular situation. Example items include: “Does your return to work program reflect what you have contributed to the organization?” and “Does your return to work program reflect the effort you have put into your work?” (original Colquitt, 2001 scale coefficient $\alpha = .90$). Interactional justice is 9-items with 4 items measuring interpersonal justice and 5 items measuring informational justice. Example items include: “Has your supervisor treated you in a polite manner?” and “Has your supervisor explained your return to work program thoroughly?” (original Colquitt, 2001 scale coefficient $\alpha = .79$). In the present study the full scale coefficient correlation is .90.

*Support for Workers with Disability Scale:* The survey (Lysaght, Fabrigar, Larmour-Trode, Stewart, & Friesen, 2012) is a measure of workplace accommodation and support as measured by 3 subscales pertaining to support from supervisor, co-workers, and family or friends. The items measure agreement with statements on a 5-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree to strongly agree”. The overall coefficient correlation of the original full scale is reported as .94 and in the present study the coefficient $\alpha$ is reported as .938. The “my supervisor” subscale consists of 24 items which include: willingly provided time off to attend appointments; expressed concern about my welfare; let me know my contributions were valued even when I was functioning below capacity (original scale coefficient $\alpha$ is .96). The “my co-worker’s” subscale consists of 17 items which includes: showed understanding of my problems, asked me how I was doing, genuinely seemed to care about my health and well-being. (original Lysaght et al., 2012 scale coefficient $\alpha = .91$) The “my family/friends” subscale consists of 9 items which
Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intention: The scale in the current study included four items measuring satisfaction drawn from the Job Diagnostic Survey developed by Hackman & Oldham (1974) which was designed to evaluate the effect of job changes on worker satisfaction. The items are based on the individual’s experience and feelings about their return to work program and are rated using a scale of 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Two items were drawn from the general satisfaction subscale measuring the degree to which the employee is happy with the job, which had a coefficient alpha of .77. Items included “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my job” and “I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job”. Two items were drawn from the supervisor satisfaction subscale, which had a coefficient alpha of .89. Items which measure how satisfied the employee is with their supervisor included “Generally I am satisfied with the overall quality of the supervision I receive in my work.” and “Generally I am satisfied with the amount of support and guidance I receive from my supervisor (original total scale α = .85). This measure has been validated and used successfully in previous research conducted by Hausknecht, Sturman, & Robertson, (2011). The present study reports the correlation coefficient as .851.

The organizational commitment scale is drawn from the Meyer, Allen, & Smith (1993) scale which was designed to measure the three types of organizational commitment (affective, continuance and normative) with items grouped into 6 factors. The scale used in the current study includes 4 items from Factor 4 – Affective Commitment and 4 items from Factor 5 –
Continuance Commitment and are rated using a Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). Affective commitment items include “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization” and “I do not feel like “part of the family” at my organization” (α = .75). Items from continuance commitment include “too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now” and “I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization” (original scale α = .82). This measure has been validated and used successfully in previous research conducted by Hausknecht et al. (2011). The correlation coefficient as measured in the present study was .823.

To measure turnover intentions, a condensed 4 item scale developed by Hanisch & Hulin (1991) was used from the original scale designed to measure work and job withdrawal. Items included “How often do you think about quitting your job?” and “How likely is it that you will explore other job opportunities in the next several months?” These items range from never to constantly. All reverse scored items were appropriately reverse-coded before data analysis and items were summed with a total mean scale score being computed. (original scale α = .86). This measure has been validated and used successfully in previous research conducted by Hausknecht et al. (2011). The correlation coefficient as measured in the present study was .861.

**Analysis**

All data were entered into SPSS Version 22 and verified by reviewing and performing data variable summaries. Means, standard deviations and non-parametric spearman rho correlations for all study variables are presented below the diagonal in Table 1. Correlations corrected for attenuation were not reported (Schmitt, 1996). Listwise deletion of missing data was used to create the correlation matrix. Correlation coefficients (Cronbach alphas) are listed
on the diagonal of the correlation matrix for each scale, with all scales achieving an acceptable coefficient correlation score of .70 or higher (Hair et al., 2006). Correlations were calculated for 47 participants.

Regression analysis was subsequently performed in order to determine relative and overall contribution of POS and POJ to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to withdraw and number of days off work, scores. Variables were entered into the regression analysis. Inter-correlations between the multiple regression variables were reported in Table 1 and the regression statistics are in Table 2. Further regression analysis was conducted as per Baron & Kenny (1986) to test for mediation effects of IW POS on IW POJ and job satisfaction and affective commitment. Bootstrap confidence intervals were used to calculate the indirect effect and significance of POJ on job satisfaction and affective commitment through POS.

Results

Covariates

Analysis of covariates indicated that age was positively related to satisfaction and affective (organizational) commitment and as such it was included in the regression analysis. Gender did not correlate with any of the dependent factors and was removed from any further analysis.

IW POJ and IW POS Findings

Hypothesis 1 was used to predict the relationship between IW POJ and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to withdraw and duration. As expected, IW POJ was positively related to a) job satisfaction and b) affective commitment. It was not correlated with
b ii) continuance commitment or d) duration. IW POJ was negatively related to c) intent to withdraw.

Hypothesis 2 was expected to predict the relationship between IW POS and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to withdraw and duration. As expected, IW POS did positively relate to a) job satisfaction and b i) affective commitment. However, it did not correlate to either b ii) continuance commitment, c) intent to withdraw or d) duration.

Hypothesis 3 was expected to predict the relationship between IW POJ and IW POS and as expected POJ and POS were positively correlated with each other.

Regression Analysis

To further test the hypotheses presented in this study, hierarchical linear regression techniques were used to explore the predictive relationships. Prior to conducting the analysis, assumptions relevant to this statistical analysis were tested. Regression analysis was conducted with the covariate, age (Model 1) and the RTW outcome variables, job satisfaction and affective commitment since age was positively correlated with both RTW outcomes. Model 2 included the regression analysis conducted on IW POJ. This provided the amount of variance accounted for by justice on each of the RTW outcome variables. Model 3 included a regression analysis conducted on IW POS, providing the amount of variance accounted for by support on each of the RTW outcome variables. A final regression analysis (Model 4) was conducted where IW POS was entered and then IW POJ was entered to see what effect IW POS has on IW POJ for each of the RTW outcome variables.
Return to Work Outcomes

**Job Satisfaction:** Age (Model 1) was entered into the regression analysis and found to positively and significantly predict job satisfaction, accounting for 9.2% of the variance ($\beta=.035$, $t(43)=2.089$, $p <.05$). In Model 2, IW POJ was entered into the regression analysis and was found to positively and significantly predict job satisfaction, accounting for 25.2% of the total variance ($\beta=.601$, $t(41)=3.720$, $p <.001$). IW POS was entered into the regression analysis in Model 3 and was found to positively and significantly predict job satisfaction, accounting for 29.8% of the total variance ($\beta=.298$, $t(43)=1.178$, $p <.001$). Finally in Model 4, IW POS ($\beta=.845$, $t(40)=2.667$, $p <.05$), is entered first, with IW POJ ($\beta=.361$, $t(41)=2.055$, $p <.05$), entered last into the regression analysis, and as expected both positively and significantly predicted job satisfaction accounting for 36.5% of the total variance of job satisfaction. The results support hypothesis 1 and 2 that IW POJ and IW POS are both positively correlated with job satisfaction. The result is consistent with existing research for workers who are not involved in a RTW process (Colquitt et al., 2001) and adds to the discussion around injured workers suggesting that those workers involved in RTW are more satisfied with their job if they are older and have high levels of both IW POS and IW POJ.

**Affective Commitment (AC).** A 4-step regression analysis was conducted with age (Model 1), IW POJ (Model 2), IW POS (Model 3) and finally IW POS and IW POJ (Model 4) being entered. In the first step, age was entered as it is the only covariate that was related to the
### Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations

#### Non Parametric Correlations: Spearman Rho

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>age of respondent</th>
<th>sex of respondent</th>
<th>Justice</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Affective Commitment</th>
<th>Continuance Commitment</th>
<th>Intent</th>
<th>number of days off work</th>
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<td>age of respondent</td>
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<td>sex of respondent*</td>
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<td>.51</td>
<td>- .020</td>
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<td>.373**</td>
<td>.549**</td>
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<td>.542**</td>
<td>.665**</td>
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<td>.233</td>
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<td>-.121</td>
<td>-.215</td>
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<td>1.000</td>
<td>(.823)</td>
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<td>Intent Withdraw</td>
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<td>-.367*</td>
<td>-.111</td>
<td>-.433**</td>
<td>-.253</td>
<td>-.669**</td>
<td>-.611**</td>
<td>.051</td>
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<td>(.861)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Number of days off work</td>
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<td>133.63</td>
<td>.291</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>-.207</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.136</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
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* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). a Listwise N = 37

Female = 0, Male = 1. Correlations corrected for attenuation were not reported.
related to AC, accounting for 23.9% of the total variance. Model 3 included IW POS (\(\beta=1.509\) \(t(41)=5.089, p <.001\)) into the regression and it is also significantly and positively related to AC with IW POS accounting for 37.2% of the total variance. Model 4 included IW POS (\(\beta=1.222\) \(t(40)=3.612, p <.001\)), then IW POJ (\(\beta=.310 t(40)=1.652, p <.106\)) and this model accounted for 42.6% of the total variance of AC. However, in Model 4, only IW POS is positively and significantly related to AC, with IW POJ becoming not significant.

**Continuance Commitment (CC).** A 3-step regression analysis was conducted on CC with Model 1 entering IW POJ, Model 2 entering IW POS and Model 3 entering IW POS first and IW POJ second against the dependent variable. In Model 1, IW POJ (\(\beta= -.074 t(38)= -.314, p <.05\)) with IW POJ not significant and accounting for less than 1% (.003) of the variable. Model 2 (IW POS) was entered into the regression analysis and it accounted for 2.1% of the variance for CC however it was also not statistically significant (\(\beta= -.366 t(40)= -.905, p <.05\)). POS, (\(\beta= .477 t(40)= -.851, p <.05\)) then IW POJ (\(\beta= .274 t(40)= .170, p <.05\)) were entered in Model 3 accounting for 2.2% of the total variance and it also was not significant.

**Intent to Withdraw (IW).** A 3-step regression analysis was conducted with IW POJ being entered first (Model 1), then IW POS entered (Model 2) and finally IW POS and IW POJ entered with IW POS entered first (Model 3). In Model 1, IW POJ (\(\beta= -.270 t(38)= -2.042, p <.05\)) is negatively and significantly related to IW accounting for 9.9% of the total variance of IW. In Model 2, IW POS (\(\beta= -.354 t(41)=-1.499, p <.05\)) was entered and it was negatively related to the variable IW, however, it was not significant. In Model 3, IW POS (\(\beta= -.152 t(40)=\)
-.561, P<.05) and IW POJ (β= -.226 t(40)= -1.449, p <.05) account for 10.7% of the total variance, however, neither variable is significant.

Duration. A 3-step regression was conducted on duration, with Model 1 entering only POJ, Model 2 entering only IW POS and Model 3 entering IW POS first and IW POJ second against the dependent variable. In Model 1, IW POJ (β=-10.778 t(40)= -.541, p<.05) with IW POJ not significant and accounting for less than 1% (.007) of the variable. Model 2 (IW POS) was entered into the regression analysis and it accounted for 1.5% of the variance for duration however it was also not statistically significant (β= -27.008 t(41)= -.722, p<.05). IW POS, (β= -24.101 t(40)= -.569 p<.05) then IW POJ (β= -4.007 t(40)= -.172, p<.05) were entered in Model 3 accounting for no more than IW POS (1.5%) of the total variance. Neither IW POS, nor IW POJ was significantly related to duration.

IW POS as a Mediator of IW POJ with RTW Outcomes: Job Satisfaction and Affective Commitment

Examination of the regression analysis conducted on IW POJ and job satisfaction and AC indicated that IW POS may be acting as a mediator of IW POJ on these two RTW outcome variables. Employing Baron & Kenny’s (1986) model for testing mediation, IW POS partially mediates the effect of IW POJ with job satisfaction and totally mediates the effect of IW POJ on AC.

Relationship between IW POJ and Job Satisfaction as Mediated by IW POS

Regression analysis was conducted to assess each component of the proposed mediation
Table 2: Regression Analysis for Organizational Justice and Organizational Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Affective Commitment</th>
<th>Continuance Commitment</th>
<th>Intent to Withdraw</th>
<th>Duration (# days off work)</th>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>.035*</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.056*</td>
<td>.076</td>
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<td>.601**</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.658**</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.380</td>
<td>1.51**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.310</td>
<td>-.274</td>
<td>-.226</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05  ** p < .001

model in Figure 2. It was found that IW POJ (path c) was positively associated with job satisfaction (β=.601, t(41)=3.720, p < .001). It was also found that IW POJ (path a) was positively related to POS (β=.926, t(42)=3.878, p < .001) and IW POS (path b) was positively related to job satisfaction (β=1.178, t(41)=4.174, p < .001). Lastly, results indicated that the mediator, IW POS (path c′) was positively associated with job satisfaction (β=.298, t(43)=1.178, p < .001). In the present study, the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effects was obtained with 1000
bootstrap resamples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Results of the mediation analysis confirmed the mediating role of IW POS in the relationship between IW POJ and job satisfaction ($\beta=.36$ CI=.036 -.691, $p <.05$) where IW POS partially mediates the effect of IW POJ in its relationship with job satisfaction.

**Relationship between IW POJ and Affective Commitment as Mediated by IW POS**

Regression analysis was conducted to assess each component of the proposed mediation model in Figure 2. It was found that IW POJ (path c) was positively associated with AC ($\beta=.658$, $t(41)=3.590$, $p <.001$). It was also found that IW POJ (path a) was positively related to POS ($\beta=.926$, $t(42)=3.878$, $p <.001$) and IW POS (path b) was positively related to AC ($\beta=1.509$, $t(41)=5.089$, $p <.001$) Lastly, results indicated that the mediator, IW POS (path c’) was positively associated with AC ($\beta=.1.509$, $t(41)=5.089$, $p <.001$). In the present study, the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effects was obtained with 1000 bootstrap resamples (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Results of the mediation analysis confirmed the mediating role of IW POS in the relationship between IW POJ and AC ($\beta=.36$ CI=.036 -.691, $p <.05$), where IW POS fully mediates the effect of IW POJ in AC.

**Figure 2: Relationship between IW POJ and RTW Outcomes as Mediated by IW POS**

![Diagram](image-url)
Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between IW POJ, IW POS, RTW outcomes: job satisfaction, organizational commitment (affective and continuance), intent to withdraw and duration. The results of the study partially support Hypothesis 1, with IW POJ being positively correlated with job satisfaction and affective commitment, and negatively correlated with intent to withdraw. The findings are consistent with POJ research on healthy workers, demonstrating that job satisfaction and affective commitment are positively related to POJ (Colquitt et al., 2001; Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001; Chang & Dubinsky, 2005; Loi et al., 2006; Rai, 2013; Colquitt et al., 2013; Choi, Moon, Ko, & Kim, 2014). IW POJ did not correlate with continuance commitment or duration. Continuance commitment is associated with a worker’s decision to remain at work based on an economic rationale, and as such they are not affected by the organization’s decisions or supervisory relationships (Meyer & Allen, 1990).

This study was conducted after the largest recession in Canadian history and as such, injured workers may have made a decision to remain at work based on a calculation that it was the most viable option.

Hypothesis 2 was also partially proven, with support being positively correlated with job satisfaction and affective commitment. Injured workers who are participating in a RTW process and who have high POS are more likely to feel valued by their organization, suggesting that they will be more satisfied with their job and more emotionally committed to their organization. High IW POS is positively related to job satisfaction and affective commitment in non-injured workers. However, IW POS was not correlated with either continuance commitment, intent to withdraw or duration.
Further regression analysis of Hypotheses 1 and 2 found that support and justice explained 25.2 and 28.7 percent of the variance of job satisfaction and 23.9 and 37.2 percent of the variance of affective commitment. However, when IW POS was entered first, then IW POJ, IW POS mediates the effect of IW POJ, partially for job satisfaction and completely for AC suggesting that it is important for employers to be aware of both support and justice for injured workers as they are involved in RTW. The nature of the social exchange relationship between the organization, supervisor and worker through the RTW process is important to consider as policies, procedures and the injured worker’s interaction with their supervisor may impact the worker’s perception of justice. Positive experiences of IW POJ and IW POS through consistently administered policies and procedures and early and ongoing communication with their supervisor would result in injured workers feeling more valued and respected, ultimately increasing their committed to their organization and their satisfaction with their job.

Interestingly, only POJ was found to account for an injured worker’s intent to leave his or her job or organization. Justice accounted for 10 percent of the variance for intent to withdraw. These findings are consistent with work conducted with healthy workers by Colquitt et al. (2001) and Rai (2013). Negative experience with disability policies and procedures or in exchanges with their supervisor during RTW may result in an injured worker feeling lack of respect from the organization resulting in lower perceptions of justice and a desire to leave their job or organization. When an injured worker leaves or intends to leave an organization, this can result in increased costs to both the worker and employer through increased claims and production costs for the employer and loss of income/benefits for the injured worker.

In this study, IW POS was found to partially mediate the relationship between IW POJ and job satisfaction, and fully mediate the relationship between IW POJ and AC. Ohana (2012)
found that POS mediates distributive justice in healthy workers, supporting the concept that if workers believe that their organization treats them fairly they then feel supported and valued by the organization leading them to be more satisfied with their job. Injured workers in this study who report high levels of POJ in their RTW process feel more supported and valued by their organization which increases their feeling of job satisfaction. Employers would benefit from developing disability management policies and practices that enhance both support and justice to improve injured worker’s feelings of job satisfaction.

IW POS fully mediates the relationship of IW POJ with AC, suggesting that employers who are fair or exhibit high levels of justice work to provide support to injured workers in RTW through offers of accommodation or ergonomic assessments as this will enhance the worker’s positive feelings towards the organization.

Finally, IW POJ and IW POS were found to be positively correlated with both organizational and supervisory support enhancing an injured worker’s feelings of being valued and respected throughout the RTW process.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations noted within this study. Although the scales for job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent to withdraw were drawn from previously tested scales and demonstrated strong internal consistency as demonstrated by coefficient alphas greater than .70 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006), the modified versions of the scales used in this study were not validated. Conducting both CFI and pilot studies for the smaller scales was needed to address the validity of the scales. Additionally, this study relied on self-report or a mono-approach with no additional data obtained from employers or peers, which
in future studies is something that should be considered. Finally, the study is cross-sectional and derived from a single source which can risk inflating variable correlations by a common method variance bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

**Future Research**

This research is unique as it has confirmed the importance of justice as a psychosocial factor to consider within RTW. It links global fairness to support, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to withdraw from an organization when considered within the context of a RTW program. Future research should further examine how the 4 justice constructs (Colquitt, 2001) relate to RTW outcomes, as well as understanding what role support plays in an injured worker’s fairness decisions. While this study demonstrated that injured worker support is a mediator of justice relative to both job satisfaction and AC, previous studies (Ambrose & Schimke, 2003; Ohana, 2012) have linked support as both a mediator and moderator of justice in healthy workers suggesting that further exploration of the relationship between justice and support within the RTW context is recommended. Leader-member exchange (LMX) also mediates the effect of justice on outcomes such as job satisfaction and intent to withdraw in the organizational literature (El Akremi, Vandenberghe, & Camerman, 2010; Silva & Caetano, 2013). Understanding the relationship between the supervisor and injured worker will add to knowledge of how the nature of that relationship impacts an injured worker throughout their RTW and ultimately affects their feelings and behaviors around the organization and their job. Justice has been linked to early contact and workplace accommodation (Hepburn et al., 2010) and the relationship of justice and other workplace-based RTW interventions (workplace-based), other outcomes (organizational citizenship) or mediators (trust or respect).
should be considered. Future studies should look to replicate the results of this study with particular interest in an injured worker’s fairness perceptions and how that impacts their decision to leave.

One of the limitations of this study was that it is a cross-sectional study and had a small participant group (n=47). Future studies should attempt to replicate the findings and to examine a longitudinal approach to examining justice and RTW perhaps examining the changes in organizational justice over time with respect to outcomes and interventions.

**Practical Implications**

This study is the first to explore how an injured worker’s perceptions of justice and support effect their decisions and behaviors with regards to return to work. Employers would benefit from examining their disability management policies and procedures to highlight areas that target how support is provided to injured workers, as this can improve injured workers’ perceptions of fairness, and increase RTW outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Organizations may also want to consider training for supervisors and management around disability management or RTW policies and procedures and supportive actions that could improve RTW outcomes such as increased job satisfaction and affective commitment.

**Summary**

RTW is complex and multi-faceted with psychosocial factors playing a significant role in the successful outcome of an injured worker getting back to work (Franche et al., 2005; MacEachen et al., 2006). This research explored the nature of the exchange relationships between organizational justice, support, satisfaction, organizational commitment, intent to
withdraw and duration. The results of this study demonstrate that justice is a significant factor in the RTW process and in decisions made by injured workers. Importantly, injured workers’ justice perceptions affect whether workers will be more satisfied with their job, more committed to their organization or more interested in leaving their organization. This study is the first to examine how perceptions of justice, linked to perceptions of support impact an injured workers’ decisions and behaviors throughout the RTW process and ultimately their outcomes of RTW.
References


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Chapter 7
Conclusions

What is the Relationship Between Organizational Justice and Return to Work?

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the relationship between perceptions of organizational justice (POJ) and return to work (RTW). The three studies undertaken in this thesis explore this relationship and provide evidence that justice is an important psychosocial variable in understanding how injured workers use fairness to make decisions throughout their RTW process that impact their attitudes and behaviors around work. To confirm that there is a need for research into POJ and RTW, a scoping study was completed which mapped out the state of current research and highlighted the gaps. Secondly, a qualitative phenomenological study explored an injured worker’s “lived experience” of justice within a RTW program, allowing a picture to emerge around 12 injured workers’ perceptions of fairness. Finally, a cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted that explored the relationship between justice, support and RTW outcomes.

Exploring Justice and RTW Literature

The results of the scoping study demonstrate clearly that there is a large gap in the research that explores justice and RTW. Fourteen studies highlight themes around fairness and RTW including claims decisions, workplace-based RTW strategies and RTW outcomes. Despite the fact that both fields of literature are well studied, the discussion around justice and how it impacts RTW has had remarkably little exploration. The results begin to define justice as a psychosocial factor to consider within RTW so that we can look at how injured workers and
other stakeholders conceptualize fair treatment and how those interpretations impact their behaviors, attitudes and ultimately their actions.

Injured Worker’s Experience of Justice within a RTW Program

The scoping study highlighted that there is very little research examining POJ and RTW outcomes. The few studies that were identified suggested that there is a need for further research into the phenomenon of justice within a RTW context. A phenomenological study was conducted to help explore how injured workers perceive fair treatment while involved in a RTW program. These injured workers told a story that allows us to understand how they made decisions around fairness, what factors they considered to be important to those decisions and how those experiences impacted their decisions around the organization and their work through their RTW program.

There were 4 main themes that arose from these experiences and can be used as a foundation for future research and the development of justice and RTW theory. The themes were: 1. consistency of treatment of injured workers; 2. accommodation, which included two subthemes: recognition of 2a) injured worker effort and 2b) respecting limitations; 3) RTW outcomes of fair treatment which included three subthemes: 3a) satisfaction with the RTW experience, 3b) commitment to my company and 3c) intending to leave my job. This theme was further explored 3ci) intensity of negative experience. The final theme was 4) support, particularly supervisor support, and how that relates to the experience of justice for these workers.

It is important to examine the participants’ stories, and the themes arising from them, help to explore the relationship between justice and RTW. The first theme of consistency of
treatment was introduced by workers as a means of describing the importance of organizational or supervisor treatment towards them. Workers reported that they collected information from a number of different sources including other organizations, their organization and their supervisor. They stated that it was the consistency of that treatment that made it relevant to them, so if their employer or supervisor treated one group of workers differently over time than another group, participants reported that they felt that was indicative of fairness. Consistency of treatment within justice can be described as equality, an allocation norm where workers are treated the same, with rewards being used by their organization or supervisor to direct an individual’s efforts towards the fulfillment of the group’s goals such as group solidarity and harmony (Leventhal, 1976). This could be seen when injured workers observed their supervisor/organization or another organization provide accommodations to a worker or themselves so that their supervisor moves the group forward towards the organizations’ goals of working together or in harmony.

The second theme of accommodation was repeated in many of the stories told by the injured workers in the phenomenological study. When the participants explained how they knew that they had received fair treatment, they reported that they felt that being or receiving an accommodation meant that they were treated fairly. Accommodation for these workers meant being provided with a new truck, new desk, modified duties, such as being able to leave early or alternate duties. With further examination of accommodation and why it was equated with fair treatment, a subtheme emerged where participants shared that employers who recognized their effort and loyalty to the company would reward that good work with an offer of accommodation. Effort and recognition of the participant’s hard work is described within the justice literature as an equity allocation norm (Leventhal, 1976). Adams (1965) showed that people are concerned
not so much about an outcome, but rather if that outcome is perceived to be fair. One way of
determining if an outcome is fair is to calculate the ratio of one’s input or contributions to one’s
outcome and then to compare that ratio to others, and that appraisal is defined within
organizational literature as distributive justice. The concept that distributive fairness can explain
the relationship between work effort and the provision of an accommodation is one that needs
further exploration. A second subtheme emerged with the workers sharing that when their
supervisors demonstrated that they recognized the worker’s limitation(s) this confirmed their
feelings of being treated fairly. If a participant felt that he or she was respected by the
supervisor, they reported that the supervisor would follow the limitations provided to guide RTW
and offer suitable accommodations such as modified duties or ergonomic equipment. The offer
of accommodation or help, needed to be provided in a polite and respectful tone by the
supervisor in order for the worker to perceive that they were being treated fairly. Workers
shared that both, the tone and quality of the exchange and the actions of the supervisor were
important to them. Workers who reported both aspects felt that their efforts within the
organization were recognized or reciprocated and that they were respected. Supervisor respect is
defined as part of interpersonal justice where the supervisor interactions with the worker are
found to be polite, respectful and that they treat a worker with dignity (Colquitt, Conlon,
Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001).

Participants explained how RTW outcomes, including “satisfaction with their job and
RTW experience”, “commitment to their organization” and the “decision to leave an
organization” were impacted by their experience of fairness throughout their RTW program.
“Satisfaction” was described by the participants as a positive outcome of the fair experience, with
workers saying they felt that they were “100 percent satisfied” or treated like “family”
throughout their journey. The subtheme “commitment” was defined by the participants as feeling emotionally connected to their organization as a result of their fair treatment. The injured workers made statements like they “loved their job” and “enjoyed coming to work” to describe how they felt. Finally, the “decision to leave their job” was defined by their negative experiences of justice. These experiences were described as very emotional and causing the workers to feel “betrayed”, like a criminal” and “a slacker”. This RTW outcome subtheme involved the worker’s decision to think about leaving an organization and is known as “intent to withdraw” within the organizational justice literature (Colquitt et al., 2001). Intention, or thinking about leaving an organization is related to perceptions of justice for both healthy and sick workers, but this is the first time that it has been linked to injured workers participating in a RTW program.

The fourth theme of support emerged through all of the participants’ experiences. Support was described by the participants as actions and behaviors by supervisors and organizations that affected their experience of fairness throughout the RTW process. Supportive actions by the supervisor or organization included valuing the worker through early contacts to ask how they are doing, providing information about meetings, and relief from work tasks. Although other types of support were mentioned by the injured workers such as co-worker and family, supervisor support was the dominant component of the support theme for injured workers and their RTW experience. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa (1986) found that organizational support reflects the degree to which the organization is perceived to value the employee’s contributions and well-being.

The story of these injured workers tells us that they look for information around how other workers are treated by their organization, their supervisor and even from other
organizations that the worker is aware of to assess if they believe they are being treated fairly throughout their RTW process. They told me that they looked for consistency of treatment towards themselves and other injured workers and used that to describe if they felt that they were fairly treated. The injured workers shared that their supervisor’s recognition of limitations and the provision of accommodations indicated to them that they were being treated fairly. This is a unique finding, as the current work in accommodation and justice has focused on co-workers’ perceptions of justice around an injured worker’s accommodation and whether they will support that worker (Colella, 2001; Colella, A., Paetzold, & Belliveau, 2004; Nichols, 2008; Paetzold, Garcia, Colella, Ren, Triana, & Ziebro, 2008; Carpenter & Paetzold, 2013; Dunstan & MacEachen, 2013). The injured workers further discussed that their experiences of justice helped to inform their opinions and behaviors about their organization or supervisor. The workers with positive experiences of justice reported that they were satisfied and felt more emotionally committed to their organization as a result of their RTW process. However, the injured workers whose experiences were negative reported that they would be either leaving their organization or had left their job at the time of the interview. They also described their experience of fairness in extremely negative terms, using stronger language and expressing their anger and frustration through physical responses such as crying. These negative experiences of justice did not need to be recent to provoke the intensity of reaction with one report being up to 5 years before the interview. Finally, organizational support, particularly supervisor support, was important to these workers as it enhanced the experience of fairness in all workers’ stories. Supervisor support was identified by the participants as a means by which the organization implemented their policies and procedures related to RTW. Supervisor support was reported as important to the participants when they discussed whether they were offered an accommodation that was
consistent with their perceived level of hard work and with how others within the organization were treated. Within the justice literature support has been found to be both a moderator and mediator of justice for workers (Aryee, Budhwar, & Chen, 2002; Loisel, Buchbinder, Hazard, Keller, Scheel, & van Tulder, 2005; Loi, Hang-yue, & dan Foley, 2006; Ohana, 2012). Support is also a psychosocial factor related to successful RTW outcomes (Ahlstrom, Hagberg, & Dellve, 2013; Dionne, Bourbonnais, Fremont, Rossignol, & Stock, 2013; Seing, MacEachen, Ekberg, & Stahl, 2015) making it important to consider in relation to perceptions of justice and RTW outcomes. The results of the phenomenological study identified themes that emerged from 12 injured workers who were participating in RTW. These themes highlight aspects of fairness found in the organizational justice and RTW literature and further exploration of these constructs is required to better understand the role of fairness in RTW.

**What is the relationship between justice, support and RTW outcomes?**

Based on the results of the scoping study and the themes that emerged in the phenomenological study, the final study examined 3 hypotheses testing the relationship between POJ, perceived organizational support (POS) and RTW outcomes including job satisfaction, organizational commitment (affective and continuance), intent to withdraw and duration. The findings partially supported Hypothesis 1 - that POJ is positively correlated with job satisfaction and affective commitment. POJ was also found to be negatively correlated with intent to withdraw. However, the POJ variable was not correlated with continuance commitment or duration. Hypothesis 2 was also partially supported with POS being positively correlated with job satisfaction and affective commitment. However, POS was not correlated with continuance
commitment, intent to withdraw or duration. Finally, the third hypothesis was fully supported, with POJ and POS positively correlated.

Further analysis of the significant relationships was conducted using regression analysis and found that POS partially mediated POJ and job satisfaction. POS and POJ accounted for 36.5% of the variance of the variable job satisfaction. POS was found to fully mediate POJ on affective commitment (AC), with 42.6% of the variance accounted for in AC. POJ was found to negatively correlate to intent to withdraw accounting for 9.9% of the total variance. POS did not significantly correlate with intent to withdraw.

These findings are important because they show that when injured workers feel they have been treated fairly throughout their RTW program, they will likely feel that they are a part of the organization and report that they are satisfied with their job and the quality of the supervision provided. High levels of POJ also suggest that injured workers feel that they are treated well by their supervisor and organization during their RTW. Fair treatment is demonstrated by the supervisor being polite, respectful and treating the worker with dignity while providing detailed information (Colquitt et al., 2001; Cohen-Charesh & Spector, 2001) about the worker’s RTW program and ensuring that the worker understands the program thoroughly. Consistent with Leventhal’s (1976) rules of procedural justice, this study suggests that RTW processes are perceived to be fair when they are consistent, free of bias, accurate, ethical, provide opportunity for voice or input into RTW and recognize the hard work and effort of the injured worker.

The study also concluded that POS, like POJ, is important to workers during the RTW program, with workers feeling supported by their supervisors, co-workers and family. High levels of POS are linked to injured workers' feelings of job satisfaction, satisfaction with the quality of supervision provided and feeling a part of their organization. POS is evidenced by the
supervisors’ knowledge of RTW, sincerity of praise, trust, good communication and actions that show they value the injured worker such as providing accommodation (Colquitt et al., 2001; Ambrose and Schminke, 2003). Co-workers are found to be supportive of RTW when they offered to help the injured worker or listened to them and provided advice on how to deal with issues around RTW (Collela et al., 2004).

Neither justice nor POS were related in this study to continuance commitment. Continuance commitment is defined as the worker needing to remain with the workplace and that this is a cost-benefit decision for the worker, therefore they would not be expected to be affected by either the organizations’ fair treatment or supportive actions (Rai, 2013). High levels of continuance commitment have had mixed findings in the justice literature with most suggesting that continuance commitment is not correlated with justice (Rai, 2013).

However, the most interesting conclusion from this study is that only perceived justice, and not POS, is related to an injured worker’s intention to withdraw or leave an organization. Injured workers who had low levels of perceived justice were more likely to begin exploring new opportunities and to leave their job within a few months. Further exploration of this factor was conducted using a linear hierarchical regression analysis which found that justice accounts for almost 10 percent of the variance of the worker’s intent to withdraw from their organization.

In conclusion this research is exciting as it demonstrates the importance of justice and support within RTW, and it is the only study that the author is aware of to find that perceptions of justice or fair treatment negatively correlate with an injured worker’s decision to leave their job. This is worthy of note as withdrawal may include the workers decision to remain off work instead of permanently leaving the organization significantly increasing the costs of injury to both the worker and workplace.
How do the results of these studies inform organizational justice’s Social Exchange Theory?

Within the justice literature, social exchange theory is the most dominant lens for examining reactions to justice and their effect on work behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2001; Cropanzano, Rupp, Mohler, & Schminke, 2001) and using social exchange theory can assist in understanding the findings of the studies and build on existing theory.

Blau (1964) defined social exchange as a relationship that develops over a long period of time between the two parties and is based on the norm of reciprocity. Social exchange can be either economic (contract that stipulates the exact quantities to be exchanged) or social (favors create diffuse future obligations which are not easily specified and the nature of the return is left to the discretion of the one who makes it) with expectations driven by each party’s experience and awareness of the benefits received by others (Blau, 1964). Within the context of an organization, the worker can form relationships with many different stakeholders including their supervisor, co-workers and the organization itself.

This research is unique and expands our understanding of social exchange theory through exploration of an injured worker’s perceptions of justice during RTW. Social exchange is a theoretical basis for understanding how an injured worker can develop fairness perceptions about the organization and supervisor. The quality and nature of the relationship between the injured worker and organization is built over time and involves negotiations both of an economic nature, such as the offer of modified or alternate work, but also of a social nature with support from the supervisor or organization enhancing the feelings of fairness for workers. Observed social exchanges with the employer and other injured workers can provide a mechanism for influencing the nature of their exchange relationship, such that seeing how other injured workers were
accommodated can providing the worker with a sense of future promise or expectations as to how they should be treated if injured.

The phenomenological study explored the relationship between the injured worker and the organization/supervisor and their perceptions of justice through the RTW process. Participants reported that the relationship with both the organization and employer were factors in deciding whether to remain or leave their job. This builds on the theory of social exchange as many of the injured workers talked about the nature of the exchange that they had with their supervisor or organization. The supervisor role in establishing the social exchange relationship was a major factor reported by all injured workers in the study. Participants reported that supervisor respect, offers of assistance or accommodation, acceptance of their limitations and recognition of the worker’s efforts within the organization influenced the nature of the injured worker’s social exchange relationship. Organizational responses to the injured worker during RTW, including consistency of implementation of disability management policies and procedures and contact from the injured worker’s supervisor and senior managers was also reported by injured workers when discussing the factors that influenced their relationship with their organization, perceptions of justice and subsequent behaviors. Support enhanced the nature and quality of the social exchange relationship, with most of the injured workers in the study feeling that supportive actions by their supervisors or organization demonstrated that they were valued which they subsequently linked to their perceptions of justice. Study participants noted that support was the provision of accommodations such as ergonomic interventions, taking over the worker’s tasks or providing modified work. Those participants who cited strong supportive actions by their supervisor noted that they believed this was proof of their value to the
organization. Finally, the injured workers often tied both value and respect or fair treatment together as important to their decision to remain or leave the organization.

The findings of the quantitative study enhance the understanding of how social exchange theory plays a role in injured worker perceptions of justice and RTW outcomes (job satisfaction, affective commitment and intent to withdraw). Support was found to influence the relationship between justice and RTW outcomes by partially mediating POJ and job satisfaction and fully mediating POJ and affective commitment. Current theory does not speak to how it can affect the exchange relationship between an injured worker and their supervisor/organization. The quantitative findings support the notion that for an injured worker the relationship between them and the organization is important and linked to their decision to remain with the employer.

**How do the Results inform Disability Management?**

Disability management is a proactive process of minimizing the impact of impairment on an individual’s capacity to participate competitively in the work environment (Shrey, 1996). Disability management encompasses the organizational policies and procedures related to RTW and the nature and type of supports provided to assist an injured worker in RTW. The role of psychosocial factors is crucial to understanding the nature and complexity of the RTW process and how the policies, procedures and supports are perceived by an injured worker. Psychosocial factors mediate the nature of a worker’s reaction to injury (Besen, Young, & Shaw, 2015). Justice, a psychosocial variable, was explored via the lens of RTW, through the studies in this thesis. The three studies expand and build on current RTW and justice research, identify themes related to how twelve injured workers perceived both justice and support while involved in RTW and finally how an injured worker’s perceptions of justice, mediated by support, affect their behavior.
during a RTW program. This research confirms the need for the incorporation of justice as a psychosocial variable to consider in future RTW research.

The scoping study revealed that despite the extensive literature for both justice and RTW independently, there are very few studies that have examined the relationship between justice and RTW. Those fourteen studies in the scoping review reported on the relationship between an injured worker’s decision to submit a claim, the role and benefit of supervisor contact for the injured worker and that an offer of accommodation from the supervisor impacts an injured worker’s perceptions of justice (Roberts & Markel, 2001; Shaw, Robertson, Pransky, & McLellan, 2001; Colella, 2001; Colella, Paetzold, & Belliveau, 2004; Nichols, 2008; Paetzold, Garcia, Colella, Ren, Triana, & Ziebro, 2008; Winefield, Saebel, & Winefield, 2008; Franche, Severin, Hyunmi, Hogg-Johnson, Hepburn, Vidmar, & MacEachen, 2009; Hepburn, Franche, & Francis, 2010a; Hepburn, Kelloway, & Franche, 2010b; Ybema & Van den Bos, 2010; Du, Cheng, Hwang, Chen, & Su, 2012; Carpenter & Paetzold, 2013; Dunstan & MacEachen, 2013). Though the scoping study revealed a limited literature base examining justice and RTW, it does enhance our understanding of how justice is a psychosocial variable to consider within the disability management processes, including workplace based RTW and offers of accommodation.

The phenomenological study explored the responses from twelve injured workers and highlighting themes such as consistency of policy and process for both, work and non-work related injuries, offers of accommodation and supervisor support as important to injured workers perceptions of justice throughout their RTW program and impacting their decisions to remain with or leave their job (RTW outcomes including job satisfaction, commitment and intent to leave). Offers of accommodation, recognition of effort and respect for their limitations were
explored by the study participants as factors important to them during their RTW experience. Disability management or RTW literature states that the employer’s commitment to consistent application of disability policies and procedures, the offer of accommodation and supervisor contact and support are all related to improved RTW outcomes (Shrey & Hursh, 1999; Franche, Cullen, Clarke, Irvin, Sinclair, Frank, & The Institute for Work & Health (IHW), 2005; Ahlstrom, Hagberg, & Dellve, 2013; Higgins, O’Halloran, & Porter, 2015).

The final quantitative study establishes the relationship of fairness perceptions of injured workers and perceptions of support and RTW outcomes, such as job satisfaction, affective commitment and intent to withdraw. The findings demonstrate that an injured worker’s perception of justice is mediated by perceptions of support for both job satisfaction and affective commitment. Perceptions of justice are negatively related to intent to withdraw. These relationships add to the discussion of justice presented in the themes in the scoping review and phenomenological study by quantifying the nature of the effect of justice and support on RTW outcomes. Disability management processes drive the RTW outcome and as such the understanding of how justice can impact on a worker’s attitudes and behaviors. The research conducted for this thesis clearly establishes the relationship between justice, as a psychosocial variable, and RTW.

In summary, the research conducted for this thesis crossed two streams of literature: organizational justice and RTW, with the results uniquely adding to our understanding of social exchange theory. Social exchange theory has become one of the most commonly expressed explanations for the effects of justice on work behavior (Cropanzano et al., 2001). This multidisciplinary paradigm describes how multiple types of resources are exchanged according to certain rules, and how this engenders high quality relationships between workers and
employers (Colquitt et al., 2001). By examining social exchange theory within a RTW context such as the formalized workplace disability management program we can understand how the current research contributes to the development of justice theory and RTW.

**Limitations**

The studies have several limitations that need to be considered. The scoping study, while adding to the knowledge base on fairness and RTW, has several limitations. The study is limited by the fact that only English language articles were selected and this may have excluded relevant research done in Europe, Asia or elsewhere. In addition, no articles before 2000 were considered in the study. However, a number of substantial systematic, meta-analytic reviews in both the OJ and RTW literature, conducted in the 2000s were included in the search, thereby potentially including pre-2000 research results. Thirdly, recent discussion on scoping study methodology by Levac, Colquhoun, & O’Brien (2010) and Pham, Rajic, Greig, Sargeant, Papadopoulos, & McEwan (2014) have moved the suggested sixth step outlined in the original Arksey & O’Malley (2005) methodology to a recommended step. As it was only a suggested step by Arksey & O’Malley (2005) (the recognized leaders in scoping methodology) this study did not include the sixth step due to restrictions of cost and time. The final or sixth step involves adding in feedback from stakeholders within the RTW process such as injured employees, employers, healthcare providers or third party insurers. These stakeholders are invited to provide input on the themes, as they have a vested interest in this area and would ensure that all material relevant to the discussion have been reviewed and included. Additionally, more than one reviewer is recommended for data extraction and analysis (Pham et al., 2014) to minimize
reporting bias. Data extraction in the current study was conducted by only one author resulting in the potential exclusion of relevant material to the discussion.

One limitation of the phenomenological study is the use of convenience sampling, which provided good access to the study population, but introduced potential bias such that certain types of participants may have been excluded. Those workers that were not referred to the clinic or unable to afford private healthcare were not included in the sample which might have resulted in the exclusion of certain unique perspectives. Convenience sampling is also non-probabilistic and does not allow for results to be generalizable to the broader population (Lucas, & Szatrowski, 2014). This concern was addressed through efforts to provide a clear description and enough detailed information on the subjects such that future researchers would be in a better position to make their own transferable judgments.

As the researcher is an integral part of the interview, there is the potential for personal bias to influence the direction of the interview and thematic analysis. Reflexivity was used to allow the researcher to systematically minimize their influence through bracketing (Hycner, 1999).

Finally, the interview process was reviewed by the author and reshaped after each interview however the use of pilot interviews may enhance the quality of the initial participant interviews (Sin, 2010).

There were several limitations noted within the quantitative study. Although the scales for job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent to withdraw were drawn from previously tested scales and demonstrated strong internal consistency as demonstrated by coefficient alpha’s greater than .70 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006), the modified versions of the scales used in this study were not appropriately validated. Conducting both CFI
and pilot studies for the smaller scales was needed to address the validity of the scales. Additionally, this study relied on self-report or a mono-approach with no additional data obtained from employers or peers, which in the future is something that should be considered. Finally, the study is cross-sectional and derived from a single source since which can risk inflating variable correlations by a common method variance bias (Podsakoff, Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Klinger, 2003).

**Practical Implications**

This research is important as it shares a picture of how an injured worker perceives justice throughout their RTW process and highlights the role of the supervisor as a key component in the RTW process for injured workers. The phenomenological study reports the following themes for the study participants and as such these might be valuable for organizations to consider within their corporate training programs for supervisors: consistency of treatment towards injured workers, offers of accommodation and supervisor support. The quantitative study confirms the relationship between perceptions of justice, support and RTW outcomes.

Employers would benefit from incorporating the outcomes from this research into supervisor training to enhance RTW outcomes. Training for supervisors has been found to increase offers of accommodation and improve RTW rates (McLellan, Pransky, & Shaw, 2001; McGuire, Kristman, Shaw, Williams-Whitt, Reguly, & Soklaredis, 2015). The research in this thesis suggests that training should focus on clearly establishing the organization’s goal of consistently offering support and offers of accommodation to all injured workers, including those who are part-time or have suffered a non-occupational injury as that impacts how injured workers (occupational injuries) perceive the fairness of their treatment by supervisors/organizations.
Incorporating training that focuses on a considerate leadership style has been found to improve offers of accommodation (McGuire et al., 2015). Leader-member exchange is a mediator of justice in the organizational literature and outcomes including job satisfaction and the intent to withdraw (Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; El Akremi, Vandenberghe, & Camerman, 2010; Ambrose, Schminke, & Mayer, 2013; Silva & Caetano, 2013) and considerate leadership training for supervisors would be useful in addressing how to interact with injured workers to create a quality exchange relationship. Considerate leadership training focuses on teaching supervisors how to be considerate, respectful, show concern, treating people as equals, open to input and being friendly (McGuire et al., 2015). Social exchange theory is important to the development of the nature and tone of the exchange relationship between an injured worker and their employer, This relationship subsequently affects an injured worker’s perception of fairness and their behaviors (RTW outcomes) suggesting that building that skill set for supervisors would enhance RTW outcomes such as job satisfaction and affective commitment.

**Final Thoughts**

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the relationship between injured workers perceptions of justice and RTW. In exploring the relationship, through this dissertation, it clearly demonstrates that justice is a psychosocial factor to consider within a RTW context. This thesis provides evidence outlining the current literature in justice and RTW, the gaps in the literature a thematic analysis of the justice perceptions of twelve injured workers during their RTW experience and the strength of the relationship between justice, support and RTW outcomes, making this a unique contribution to both the justice and RTW literature.
References


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http://www.wsibstatistics.ca

doi:10.1037/a0030853


doi:10.1006/obhd.2001.2958


Appendix 1

Interview Protocol

1) Introduction and purpose of the research study: This purpose of this study is to discuss your experience of how fairly you were treated during your return to work program with X organization. The interview will be approximately 1 hour in length. With your permission, I will record the interview on this digital recorder. The purpose of recording the interview is to allow me to engage in the dialogue with you and to be able to review the transcript with you to ensure that I understand your return to work experience properly. Once the interview is transcribed, I may have further questions about what we discussed and would set up a second meeting to review the additional questions and to confirm details of our discussion.

2) Confirm basic demographic data to include: age, occupation, length of time in position/with employer, level of education, type and severity of injury, first injury occurrence, current rtw status (at work in own occupation with no limitations, at work in own occupation with limitations, at work in alternate occupation (with or without limitations), not at work), if not at work – anticipate another rtw attempt.

3) This is a dialogue between us about your experience of fair treatment during your rtw (disability management) process and as such there are no set expectations. I have some questions that may help prompt the discussion if needed.
   • Tell me about your rtw experience
   • Explain what your understanding of rtw was prior to this experience
   • What role did the occupational health nurse have in your rtw
   • Tell me how you feel you have been treated throughout the rtw process. Provide examples wherever possible
     • By your supervisor
     • By the organization as a whole
     • By the OHN/Co-workers
   • Tell me what you know about how other workers were treated in their rtw programs
   • Compare your experience with theirs – was it better or worse, explain
   • Tell me how you were able to contribute to your rtw program
   • Explain to me how you felt that you were heard by the organization/your supervisor and provide examples
   • What could have been done differently to improve the treatment you received in your disability management process.
   • Describe how the treatment you received in your rtw program affected your thoughts about your supervisor/organization
   • How did that treatment affect your behaviours
   • How satisfied were you with the rtw process, the treatment and activities of your supervisor and the overall outcome of the rtw program
   • Provide me with some examples of how you were treated by your supervisor and the organization as a whole
• Explain how you felt that you were supported by your supervisor and the organization during your rtw program
• Is there anything else that you feel we haven’t discussed about how you were treated during your rtw program that you want to share.

If you have any supporting documentation that you feel would be helpful in understanding your rtw experience can you please provide that to me. I will contact you once I have had a chance to review the taped interview to see if there is anything that you missed that you want to share with me or to clarify any questions that I may have about the interview and your experience.

Thank you for your time today.
Script for Receptionist at Clinic

Invitation to Participate in a Research study on Return-to-Work for Workers with a Disability or Injury

Dear _____________________

Limestone Health Physiotherapy Clinic is participating in a research study on “Return-to-Work for Workers with a Disability or Injury” with Queen’s University. We are contacting clients who have attended our clinic and have participated in a return to work program within the past 6 months and inviting them to participate in the study.

Participation in the study takes about 1 hour and would be conducted at a time and location suitable to you. The study is completely anonymous and you will be given a $25 gift certificate from Chapters for participating in the study.

If you think you qualify and would like more information about participating in the study I (reception) will, with your verbal consent, contact the research team and provide them with your contact information. The research team will then contact you to provide more information about participating in the return to work project. By choosing to speak with the research team you are not committed to participating in the study. If you decide you are interested in participating once you speak with a member of the research team, they will forward you a consent form.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Because of your experiences with return to work, your insights will be extremely valuable.

Thank you,

Receptionist, Limestone Health Physiotherapy Clinic
CONSENT FORM

I, _____________________, have volunteered to participate in the study titled: Exploration of perceived organizational justice with injured healthcare workers who have participated in a disability management program.

I understand that I will be interviewed by a research associate at Queen’s University for a period of approximately 1 hour. The interviewer will ask me to discuss my experiences regarding my recent return to work program and how I felt I was treated by my organization, my supervisor and overall how fair I feel the outcomes were from my return to work program. I understand that with this consent, the interview will be taped and transcribed for review. I understand that a second follow up interview will be conducted to review the transcript from the first interview make any appropriate changes to the transcript to ensure the clarity of my responses. I will be able to conduct the second interview either in a telephone or in-person format.

I understand that the following security measures will be in place for the data collected, including follow up notes, memos, and field notes. The hard copy data will be stored in a secure locked cabinet and electronic copies of the transcribed interview will be protected in the computer through passwords and software security for the computer system (firewall and anti-virus software). All data will be maintained for a period of 5 years and then shredded.

I understand that my participation in the study is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time. I also understand that my confidentiality will be protected throughout the study, and that the information I provide will be available only to researchers with scholarly interests in disability management and organizational justice.

Should I have further questions I understand that I can contact any of the following individuals: Dr. Rosemary Lysaght, Principal Investigator or Dr. Cheryl King- Van Vlack, or the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board, Dr. Steve Leighton, (613) 533-6081, email: CHAIR.GREB@QUEENSU.CA.

I consent to the above information and understand what is required for participation in the study.

Signature: _______________________________________

Date: _______________________________________

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Original List of Nodes

1. Thankful
2. Co-worker support – positive (approachable)
3. Supervisor feedback – negative
4. Supervisor feedback – positive
5. Supervisor support – positive
6. Co-worker support – negative (includes devalued, talked about me; no scar therefore no injury) includes node 8
7. Supervisor support – negative (pushy, intimidating)
8. Moved to 6
9. Policy and procedures (DM)
10. Fairness negative – different treatment from others (Inequality)
11. Fairness positive – treated the same (equality); treated well
12. Ignored
13. Felt badly, uncomfortable, frustrated, feel like a damper, feel like a criminal
14. Accommodation (following restrictions)
15. Forgotten
16. Satisfaction
17. Doesn’t care about employee
18. Respect/disrespect (should add these to fairness)
19. Modified work
20. Pain
21. Avoid conflict with others (withdrawal)
22. Previous experience with RTW
23. Hard worker/good employee
24. Confronted negative co-worker (stood up for self)
25. Withdrew from event, work activity, job, withdrawing (add to 21 and combine)
26. Stood up for self (combine with 24)
27. Support – family
28. Organizational Commitment
29. Employer concern about employee
30. Perception of injured worker as a good worker (combine with 23)
31. HCP – listen to them
32. Employee felt valued or appreciated (combine with support)
33. Voice opinion
34. Supportive organization
35. Organizational support (combine)
36. Privacy for injured employee
37. Employee works and does not complain about pain or discomfort (presenteeism?)
38. Type of injury (work related or non occ)
39. Injured employee does not like going to work (withdrawal?) potential combine
40. Work through pain (combine with 37)
41. Appreciated by company (organization support – combine with 30)
42. All staff treated the same (combine with fairness – consistency)
43. Experience of RTW (positive) or (negative) separate into 2 nodes?
44. Lack of support from organization (they don’t care)
45. RTW early because of co-worker support or employer support (move to either co-worker support or employer support – positive)
46. Fear of future
47. Employer lack of understanding – move to lack of employer support (45)
48. Supervisor support – negative – bypassed supervisor due to lack of support – combine with supervisor support (node 7)
49. Know RTW should be better – move to p&p ?? or support
50. Advocate for injured staff
51. Let go because of injury (Combine with P&P?)
52. Communication with employer by injured worker - good
53. Job threatened if not RTW – support? Fairness?
54. Betrayed – lack of support? Combine with this?
55. RTW pushed by employer (lack of support for recovery??)
56. Communication with employer - poor
Appendix 2

Office Manager/Customer Service Representative Script Study 2

Lifemark Health, a facility of Centric Health is participating in a research study with Queen’s University in Kingston, ON “Relationship Between Perceived Organizational Justice, Perceived Organizational Support and Return to Work Outcomes: Do Perceptions of Fairness and Support Influence Return to Work?”. Lifemark Health’s role is to identify potential study participants and provide them with the research package.

This is a confidential study and it is your choice to participate. Your decision will not affect your treatment at this clinic, regardless of whether you decide to participate or not. Lifemark Health will have no knowledge of whether you decided to participate in the research as we will provide the research package to all potential study participants and you send it in to the university researcher if you decide to participate. There is a self-addressed stamped envelope included in the package.

Information about the research study is included in the package as well as contact information should you have additional questions.

Are there any questions I can answer for you now?
Letter of Information

“Relationship Between Perceived Organizational Justice, Perceived Organizational Support and Return to Work Outcomes: Do Perceptions of Fairness and Support Influence Return to Work”

This research is being conducted by Sherrey Larmour-Trode under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary Lysaght, in the School of Rehabilitation Therapy, Faculty of Health Sciences at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

What is this study about? The purpose of this research is to test the strength of the relationship between perceived organizational justice, perceived organizational support and return to work outcomes. The study will require you to complete 2 short surveys up to 3 weeks post injury and 3 surveys at 3 months post injury. There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with this study.

Is my participation voluntary? Yes. Although it be would be greatly appreciated if you would answer all material as frankly as possible, you should not feel obliged to answer any material that you find objectionable or that makes you feel uncomfortable. You may also withdraw at any time with no effect on your treatment at Centric Health clinics. You may withdraw by contacting the research investigator and indicating your decision to not participate in the study. Your completed survey material will be shredded at the time of your request.

What will happen to my responses? We will keep your responses confidential. Only experimenters will have access to this information. To help us ensure confidentiality, please do not put your name on any of the research study answer sheets. To coordinate the 2 sets of survey information, you will be asked to create a unique code for each set of surveys so that they can be matched. The data may also be published in professional journals or presented at scientific conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will never breach individual confidentiality. Should you be interested, you are entitled to a copy of the findings.

Will I be compensated for my participation? Yes, all study participants who complete the second set of surveys will be provided a card to complete and return for a draw. The draw is for a $200 gift card and the winner will be randomly drawn at the end of the study. Your chance of winning is based on the number of cards received.

What if I have concerns? Any questions about study participation may be directed to the research investigator, Sherrey Larmour-Trode at osll@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

Again, thank you. Your interest in participating in this research study is greatly appreciated.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of Canadian ethics guidelines, and Queen’s policies.
Consent Form: Study 2

I, __________________, have volunteered to participate in the study titled Relationship Between Perceived Organizational Justice, Perceived Organizational Support and Return to Work Outcomes: Do Perceptions of Fairness and Support Influence Return to Work?

I understand that I will be asked to complete 2 short surveys, up to three weeks post injury, asking me questions about how I feel I have been treated and supported by my organization, supervisor and co-workers. I also understand that I will be asked to complete an additional survey 3 months after completing the first survey. This survey will ask questions about my satisfaction with the return to work process, my commitment to the organization and my intention to leave the organization. I understand that it may take approximately 20 minutes to complete each survey with a maximum time commitment of 40 minutes.

I understand that I will be asked to code my survey form to maintain confidentiality by using my year of birth and the second letter of my first and last name. This code will be placed at the top right hand corner of all surveys.

I understand that the following security measures will be in place for the survey data collected:
- the hard copy data will be stored in a secure locked cabinet
- electronic copies of the on-line surveys will be protected in the computer through passwords and software security for the computer system (firewall and anti-virus software)
- all data will be maintained for a period of 5 years and then shredded.

I understand that my participation in the study is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time. I also understand that confidentiality will be protected throughout the study, and that the information I provide will be available only to the researchers.

Should I have further questions I understand that I can contact any of the following individuals: Sherrey Larmour-Trode, Principal Investigator at (613) 539-3172, email: OSLL@QUEENSU.CA; Dr. Marcia Finlayson, Director, Associate Dean at (613) 533-6727, email: marcia.finlayson@queensu.ca.

Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at CHAIR.GREB@QUEENSU.CA or 613-533-6081

I understand that I am providing the following information so that the researcher may contact me to receive the second survey in 3 months.

Email: _________________________________
Telephone: ______________________________
Mailing address: _______________________

Please return the signed consent form and contact information with the completed survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided.

I understand the above information, have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and consent to participation in this study?

Signature: _______________________________
Date: _________________________________
Appendix 3

Survey: Organizational Justice Measure

Demographic Information:  

Sex (circle)  M F  
Age ____________  
Job Title ________________  
Length of time in job position (year and months) ____________  
Level of education  up to Grade 12  Technical Training  
College  University  Graduate Degree  
Type of Injury  Soft Tissue (1)  Fracture (2)  Other (3) ____________  
Number of days off work due to injury: ________________  
Date of Injury: ____________  
Current work status (circle): FT own job, FT modified duties, PT modified duties, Not at work  

The following scale has been developed to assess your level of perceived organizational justice based on how you were treated during your return to work (RTW). Answer the following questions based on your experience or treatment by your organization or supervisor during your return to work using a scale of 1 – 5, with 1 = to a small extent and 5 = to a large extent.

The following items refer to the procedures used to arrive at your RTW.

To what extent:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To a small extent</th>
<th></th>
<th>To a large extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have you been able to express your views and feelings during the process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Have you had influence over your RTW during the process?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Have the RTW processes been applied consistently?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Have those processes been free of bias?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Have those processes been based on accurate information?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Have you been able to appeal your RTW program arrived at by those processes?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
7. Have those processes upheld ethical and moral standards?

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<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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</table>

The following items refer to your RTW program. To what extent:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To a small extent</th>
<th>To a large extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does your RTW program reflect the effort you have put into your work?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is your RTW program appropriate for the work you have completed?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does your RTW program reflect what you have contributed to the organization?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is your RTW program justified, given your performance?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following items refer to the supervisor who is responsible for your RTW program. To what extent:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To a small extent</th>
<th>To a large extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Has (he/she) treated you in a polite manner?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Has (he/she) treated you with dignity?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has (he/she) treated you with respect?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Has (he/she) refrained from improper remarks or comments?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following items refer to the supervisor who is responsible for your RTW program. To what extent:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>To a small extent</th>
<th>To a large extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Has (he/she) been direct in (his/her) communication with you?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Has (he/she) explained the RTW program thoroughly?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Were (his/her) explanations regarding the RTW program reasonable?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Has (he/she) communicated details about the RTW program in a timely manner?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Has (he/she) seemed to tailor (his/her) communication to your specific needs?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey: Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment and Intent to Withdraw

Demographic Information:

Code: ______________________

Date of injury: __________  Date returned to work: __________________________

Current work status (circle): FT own job, FT modified duties, PT modified duties, not at work

Answer the following questions based on your experience and feelings about your return to work program using a scale of 1 – 7, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Generally I am satisfied with the amount of support and guidance I receive from my supervisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Generally I am satisfied with the overall quality of the supervision I receive in my work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I do not feel a strong sense of “belonging” to my organization*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I do not feel like “part of the family” at my organization.*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Right now staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire.  

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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. It would be very hard for me to leave my organization right now even if I wanted to.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Too much of my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organization now.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Answer the following questions based on your experience and feelings about your return to work program using the scales below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>13. How often do you think about quitting your job?</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Constantly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. How likely is it that you will quit your job in the next several months?</td>
<td>Very Unlikely</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Neither Likely nor Unlikely</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Very Likely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. How likely is it that you will explore other job opportunities in the next several months?</td>
<td>Very Unlikely</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Neither Likely nor Unlikely</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Very Likely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. All things considered, how desirable is it for you to quit your job?</td>
<td>Very Undesirable</td>
<td>Undesirable</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>Very Desirable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support for Workers with Disability Scale

Below are some questions about your supervisor at work, your coworkers, your organization, and your family and friends. Read each item carefully and circle the number that best describes your level of agreement with the statement, from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Supervisor…</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>offered flexibility in work hours</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>willingly provided time off to attend appointments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>made me feel guilty about needing accommodations*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrated knowledge of the work re-entry process</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expressed genuine and sincere concern</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responded quickly to address my injury/disability-related needs at work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>told me to take it easy when I was having problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contacted me outside of work to enquire as to my welfare</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensured accommodations were provided in a timely manner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>praised me for effort I was putting in</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let me know my contributions were valued even when I was functioning below capacity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provided me with honest feedback when I returned to work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provided mostly negative feedback in regards to my progress when I returned to work*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Neither Agrees nor Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressured me to take on additional duties before I was ready*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not always follow the recommendations of my health providers*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated that he/she trusted me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not provide information unless asked*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was supportive of changes that were needed in my duties or schedule</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was open to talking about my concerns</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbally attacked me at times*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**My Coworkers...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agrees nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gave me help in knowing the steps to follow regarding my injury/disability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offered to help me in some way</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checked in with me outside of work to see how I was doing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let me have as much privacy as I needed when I wasn’t wanting to talk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me feedback on how I was doing the job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genuinely seemed to care about my health and well-being</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would ask me how I was doing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were hostile or distant when I was functioning below capacity*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave me good advice relative to my injury/disability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
were able to share information from their own experience

jumped in and offered to take some of the load off me

offered to help me with things outside of work

were willing to listen to my problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Family and / or Friends...</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>showed they supported me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helped out with responsibilities at home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gave me suggestions on how to deal with my problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care about what happens to me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give me love and affection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are available to talk to me about my personal problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are available to talk to me about my work-related problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would help if I needed transportation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would help if I was having problems due to my injury/disability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Reverse-scored item