



Finnish Institute of  
Occupational Health

# *Well-being through work*



Finnish Institute of  
Occupational Health



UNIVERSITY  
OF TAMPERE



Työsuojelurahasto  
Arbetskyddsfonden  
The Finnish Work Environment Fund

# Evaluating Work Ability and Negotiating Return to Work after Sickness Absence

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# Members of research group



## University of Tampere

- **Johanna Ruusuvuori**, Professor of Social Psychology
- **Hanna-Leena Ristimäki**, Doctoral Student and Research Assistant
- **Emma Korpi**, Student

## Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

- **Pirjo Juvonen-Posti**, Senior Specialist
- **Inka Koskela**, Researcher
- **Sanna Pesonen**, Researcher
- **Nina Nevala**, Senior Researcher
- **Päivi Husman**, Director
- **Soile Seppänen**, Specialist in Occupational Medicine
- **Marita Riikonen**, Senior Specialist
- **Mika Nyberg**, Senior Specialist
- **Eero Nukari**, Head of E-learning Development

# 1 Background and Motivation

Opportunities and readiness to accommodate work and working conditions are important drivers that boost the employee's return to work (e.g. Krause, Dasinger & Neuhauser 1998, Waddell & Burton 2001).

Joint negotiations on the employee's RTW solutions aim to find concrete means to support the employees' return to work.

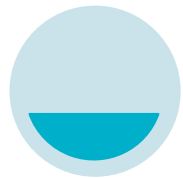
However, there is

- a plethora of different models and recommendations for conducting joint negotiations
- a lack of research on the interactional process and practices of joint negotiations

This study examines participants' interaction in and experiences of joint negotiations

- working together towards a shared decision?
- working together towards equal participation and shared agency?

# 2 Data

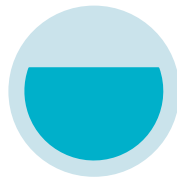


## Participants' perspective

Questionnaires on expectations before joint negotiations

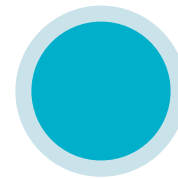
Individual interviews after negotiations

- employees (n=15)
- supervisors (n=15)
- physicians (n=15)



## Interaction data

Videotaped and transcribed interaction data on joint negotiations (n=15)



## Documents

Workplace's official model for supporting employee work ability (n=15)

Negotiation minutes (n=15)



# 3 Research questions

Our study explores:

- (1) What kind of RTW solutions do the participants find? What topics are dealt with during the joint negotiations? How do the participants themselves evaluate the usefulness of the negotiations in their RTW process?
- (2) How are the RTW solutions designed in interaction during the joint negotiations? What opportunities do the parties have to participate in decision-making? How do they construct the decision-making?

# 4 Analytical approaches

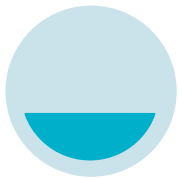
## Case-by-case analysis

- Each joint negotiation forms an analytical case/unit
- Analysis and specification of contents of analytical case/unit

## Conversation analysis

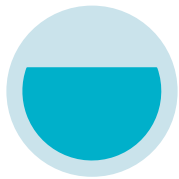
- Video-recorded data from authentic encounters
- Joint negotiations are constructed turn by turn, and all participants play a role in the construction process
- How are actions performed, and how are they related to both previous and future turns? → How do they form social actions?

# 5 Knowledge produced by the study



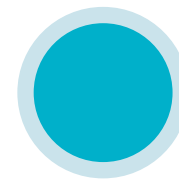
## Case-by-case analysis

- Participants' experiences of usefulness of negotiations
- Participants' own interpretation of decision and their participation in decision-making



## Conversation analysis on joint negotiations

- Ways in which negotiations are carried out through interaction
- Decision-making structures and practices
- Opportunities to take part in decision-making



## Multimethod approach of data

- Synthesizing results of two previous analyses
- Decision perceived by participants, as written in negotiation minutes, and as an interactional achievement
  - Good negotiation practices that enhance participation of all parties




# 6 Practical Implication

- Description of the interaction of joint negotiations enables informed, deliberate development of RTW negotiation practices.
- Results lead to an open access digital learning environment for negotiation practices to be produced for employees, supervisors and representatives of occupational health services

# 7 We look forward to...

...your contact,  
if you, or your colleague  
have carried out/are currently  
carrying out  
qualitative research on similar  
RTW interventions/negotiations...

...any hints,  
if you know of any existing  
qualitative studies on RTW  
interventions/negotiations  
/practices, let us know!



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### Joint negotiation on employee's return to work solutions

**Publications**  
**Steering committee**

**Joint negotiation on employee's return to work solutions**

This study investigates the ways in which employees' return to work is supported through a negotiation between the employee, supervisor and representative of occupational health services. The study analyses how the negotiating parties participate in the decision-making process and the subjects of their conversation.

The study also offers a way in which to understand the entire negotiation process and describes the participants' experiences of the negotiation. The study results can be utilized in the training of occupational health services' professionals and in developing the operations of organisations performing the negotiation between employee, supervisor and representative of occupational health services.

The study is conducted in co-operation between the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the University of Tampere during the period 1.8.2015 – 31.12.2018. The study has been funded by The Finnish Work Environment Fund.

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