

## **SUSTAINABLE RETURN TO WORK AFTER ILL-HEALTH: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS**

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**Introduction:** Helping workers return to work (RTW) early has become crucial as evidence from studies suggests that extended absence from work becomes detrimental to physical and mental health, making it difficult for workers to RTW at all, which then increases bespoke costs. However, there is still a significant gap in knowledge regarding the sustainability of RTW after ill-health.

**Objective:** A systematic review was conducted to synthesize empirical evidence on the impacts of personal and social factors such as; support from leaders and co-workers, job crafting and employee's personal characteristics on sustainable RTW after ill-health.

**Methods:** 79 studies fulfilled the inclusion criteria. All 79 studies were critically appraised, and data were extracted and synthesised.

**Results:** The narrative synthesis showed: all evaluated personal and social factors showed a general consistent positive effect on sustainable RTW; studies assessing job crafting and employee's personal characteristic like duration of absence, economic status/income and job contract/ security were too few to draw a definite conclusion on, even though they presented exciting areas for future studies and; findings also produced inconsistent evidence surrounding the effects of gender, implying that gender likely interacts with a factor or range of factors to influence RTW.

**Conclusion:** Sustainable RTW was evident across studies, indicating that although age and education influence the outcome, returning workers are more likely to have a positive attitude towards work and confidence in carrying out their duties on RTW in an environment where the RTW fosters support from both leaders and co-workers.

### **Biography**

Abasiama Etuknwa is currently a PhD student at Norwich Business School- University of East Anglia. She holds a BSc and MSc degree in Biochemistry and Environmental Health respectively. Her research interests are within the areas of occupational health and safety, ergonomics and work-related well-being. She is particularly interested in determining practical measures that would reduce work-related risk to health, reduce sickness absence and help employees on sick leave return to work sustainably.

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