

NARRATIVES OF AGENCY IN JOB BURNOUT RECOVERY

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September 2015

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

ANDREOU, ELENA: Narratives of agency in job burnout recovery, Master's thesis, 61 pages + 2 appendices

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Psychology, Management and Leadership

September 2015

The present qualitative study investigates the experiences of job burnout recovery and non-recovery concentrating on the role of human agency. This study is additionally interested in workplace change as a component of the recovery process. The four studied individuals had participated and benefited from a rehabilitation that took place two years earlier to conducting the present study, yet their recovery processes after rehabilitation differ greatly from each other. The study utilized a triangulation of analysis methods, using content analysis to recognize the used forms of agency and narrative analysis to examine the individual pathways of recovery or non-recovery.

Four narratives were constructed on the basis of the forms of agency that the individuals told to be significant to leading to the current state of the wellbeing: *1) the discovery of personal agency: from workaholism to finding balance*, *2) the narrative of non-agency: in the midst of constant change and increasing demands*, *3) the narrative of supported agency: from pleading for help to regained joy and spirit* and *4) the continuous struggle for support: the burden of excessive responsibility*. Forms of agency that were described as significant for recovery were taking responsibility of recovery, changing attitude to work, support received from rehabilitation, health care and family and workplace change. Similarly, forms of agency that hindered recovery were the increasing demands of the workplace and the lack of support from manager and colleagues.

These findings show that recovery from job burnout is experienced by the recovering individuals to require an ability to exercise control over themselves and the environment by exercising both personal and proxy agency. Overall this study contributes to the understanding of burnout recovery process by showing its diverse and individual nature. These findings can be further utilized in treatment of job burnout by taking into account individual features and needs in ensuring recovery and recognizing the importance of the ability to exercise control.

Keywords: burnout, recovery, agency, narrative

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recovery from burnout has been mostly addressed by the study of different treatments and interventions quantitatively (Hätinen, Kinnunen, Pekkonen, & Kalimo, 2007; Maslach & Schaufeli, 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998), yet little is known about the process what makes these treatments effective and sometimes ineffective in treating burnout. As the Finnish government invested 28 million euros into different forms of vocational rehabilitation in 2013 alone (Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2013) it is crucial to investigate thoroughly the effectiveness of these interventions and the mechanisms that make these interventions beneficial for burnout recovery.

In order to make the burnout interventions more successful in producing recovery, it is essential to determine the driving mechanisms of long-term burnout recovery. It is also useful to study individuals that have not permanently recovered yet undergone the same treatment, as this can further shed light on potential drawbacks in recovery. There has been some qualitative studies on the recovery process both connected to rehabilitation (Eriksson, Karlström, Jonsson, & Tham, 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund, Stenlund, Steinholtz, & Ahlgren, 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Salminen, Mäkikangas, Hätinen, Kinnunen, & Pekkonen, 2015) and retrospective studies on burnout recovery not connected to an intervention (Bernier, 1998; Regedanz, 2008) that have revealed preliminary information on some of the central mechanisms driving the recovery process. Taking control of own recovery and thus gained agency has repeatedly risen as the core feature of recovery in these studies (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015). These studies of recovery have not however examined agency in the recovery process by itself, but rather found it emerging from the material to be a driving mechanism of recovery among others, which is why the role of agency should be further clarified. Even though agency seems to be strongly related to recovery, it is still unclear whether increasing agency is an enabling mechanism or the result of recovery.

The present qualitative study investigates the experiences after rehabilitation of four individuals. These individuals participated and benefited from two years before conducting the present study, yet their recovery processes after rehabilitation differ greatly from each other. Based on this unique qualitative data, this study attempts to address gaps in prior research and contribute to the burnout literature in three ways. Firstly, it clarifies and describes the role of agency in the process of recovery. Secondly, it highlights the long-term viewpoint on burnout recovery and pays attention to the features that enable the long-term experience of recovery. A limitation of many previous

recovery studies is that they view recovery in a short time period, thus neglecting the fact the burnout recovery is process that requires time and reflection and proceeds through different phases of ups and downs (Regedanz, 2008). In addition, research on the effects of rehabilitation has found ambiguous evidence for the long-term persistence (Kurki, 2004; Suoyrjö et al., 2008; Turja, 2009). Thirdly, changing workplace has been found to be an essential stage for recovery (Bernier, 1998) as well as very common following sick leave from burnout (Schroer, 1993). The purpose that workplace change serves for burnout recovery has not however been further studied. Thus the final contribution of this study is to shed light on the meaning of workplace change to recovery.

1.1. Drivers of burnout recovery

Job burnout is caused by a mismatch between an individual and its environment and is typically defined as a psychological response to prolonged stress involving the three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy (Maslach, 1993; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). This three-dimensional definition is often utilized in academic research, mainly because of its operationalization via the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Pines and Keinan (2005) alternatively view burnout is as a form of existential crisis. Maslach's (1993) three-dimensional definition and Pines and Keinan's (2005) definition are employed in this study. The three-dimensional definition is a comprehensive description of the state of burnout and has been used for assessing burnout in the participants of the study. Pines's and Keinan's (2005) definition on the other hand pays attention to the role of internal interpretations in the causation of burnout, which are fundamental to the present study. Attempting to recover from job burnout, the participants of the present study are required to re-examine their interpretations of the causes of their burnout and possibly find new interpretations. The importance of internal interpretations is further highlighted in the drivers of recovery found by previous literature.

The qualitative literature on recovery has been successful in revealing drivers of burnout recovery. This literature can be categorized into two groups: studies related to the rehabilitation context and retrospective studies not tied to any specific intervention. The first group of studies refers to studies conducted on individuals that either are undergoing or have undergone rehabilitation (Eriksson, 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Salminen et al., 2015). The second group of studies of retrospective studies is done on individuals that share the common criteria of having established recovery from job burnout, not undergone any specific

common intervention and are being studied after a longer period of experienced recovery (see Bernier, 1998; Regedanz, 2008). The present study can be classified in the first group, as all interviewees have undergone rehabilitation. However, in this section both groups of studies will be reviewed side by side, as both provide insightful information about the driving mechanisms behind job burnout recovery. Four common drivers can be found in these recovery studies, namely support, awareness, values and agency, which will be reviewed in the following section.

The first common element for all recovery studies was the received *support* during the recovery process (Bernier, 1998; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015). Support received from family and friends provided respect, understanding and reassurance, which was evaluated as important to recovery (Bernier, 1998; Regedanz, 2008). Also support received from health care professionals and workplace was appraised as significant (Bernier, 1998). Individuals that took part in rehabilitation experienced the support received in the beginning of rehabilitation as a trigger for the recovery process (Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Salminen et al., 2015). Rehabilitation offered them feelings of affirmation from others (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010) and being a part of a group and belonging (Eriksson et al., 2010; Salminen et al., 2015). Support received from the workplace included offering opportunities for mobility, which enabled some of the individuals finding satisfaction in their work (Bernier, 1998). Seeking support was also a prevalent strategy in dealing with burnout (Bernier, 1998), which implies that the presence of support is an important enabler of recovery.

The second significant driver of recovery that was identified in many previous studies (Bernier, 1998; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Salminen et al., 2015) was *increased awareness*. This increased awareness includes both increased awareness of burnout as a psychological phenomenon as well as increased self-awareness in regard to burnout. Understanding usual causes, symptoms and the commonness of burnout is provided a sense of relief and understanding (Salminen et al., 2015). Similarly increasing self-awareness of their personal limits and needs (Nikkanen, 2006; Salminen et al., 2015) and the causes to their own burnout (Bernier, 1998; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010) provided a sense of relief. Increasing self-awareness also encompassed learning to recognize their own warning signals, observe their bodily signs, need of rest and to deal with the body's signals of rest (Eriksson et al., 2010).

Thirdly, *questioning* and *changing values* was a recurring theme across the burnout recovery literature (Bernier, 1998; Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015). Individuals realized they had to re-evaluate their values and prioritize health over adhering to personal standards or striving for perfectionism. Bernier (1998) also described questioning values as the one of the six stages in the process of job burnout recovery,

implying that questioning values is something all individuals go through during their recovery, whether they change them or not. The idea of reconsidering values returns to the existential definition of burnout. Regedanz (2008) was especially concerned with the existential nature of burnout in her study, and demonstrated how finding new meaning in their lives after burnout was significant for the recovery. This finding of meaning returns to the idea of changing priorities and values. The focus of the retrospective studies more strongly on values might also be due to methodological features of the studies: the findings of the rehabilitation recovery studies are strongly connected with the rehabilitation process, while the latter group of studies is retrospective in nature, and participants look at their process backwards. Moreover, related to changing values, recovery often resulted to a changed attitude towards things, most commonly a more approving and merciful attitude towards oneself (Nikkanen, 2006; Salminen et al., 2015).

However, the driver most prevalent and visible in the recovery studies was regaining *agency*. This feature of agency had been labeled differently: for example rehabilitation studies named it as taking control of recovery (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Salminen et al., 2015) while Regedanz (2008) found many elements which can be classified under the concept of agency such as sense of control, sense of agency, ability to make choices, increased confidence and self-care. Agency as the central driver was visible and present during the whole recovery process in the rehabilitation studies (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Salminen et al., 2015). After participants began feeling initial signs of well-being they expressed a will to take control of their lives again and chose to see a positive future (Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010). They began implementing things they learned at rehabilitation into their lives and changed the way of handling stressful situations, which resulted in increased wellbeing (Eriksson et al., 2010). 20 out of 21 of the participants in Regedanz's study (2008) experienced a return to self-directed control, in contrast to the feelings of entrapment they felt during the burnout. These findings indicate that gaining control, whether it is a means or an end is a crucial part of recovery.

In sum, findings from both rehabilitation-induced recovery studies as well as the retrospective recovery studies have acknowledged very similar mechanisms driving recovery from burnout. Although support was an important element in all of the studies, it seemed to act as an encouraging starting point, while internal changes of awareness, values and agency seemed to be the effective drivers of recovery. Agency seems to be tightly related to the process of recovery, which is why a theoretical examination of agency as the base of recovery might provide insight to the recovery of burnout. Therefore, Bandura's theory of human agency (2001) will be reviewed in the next section to give a deeper picture of human agency and describe how the different drivers of recovery can be ultimately linked to the core driver of taking control.

1.2. Human agency

Agency has been discovered to be an important part of recovery from job burnout (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015). Also Cochran and Laub (1994) uncovered how the recovery of occupational functioning after a serious injury involved a transformation in their life narrative from a victimic to an agentic tone. The victimic-agentic tone dichotomy is widely used in classifying life narratives by the extent the protagonists portray their life being under their control (Bruner, 1994; McAdams, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1995a). When the narrator depicts himself or herself as a victim, they describe themselves as passive, prone to the environment and life being out of their control (Polkinghorne, 1995a). The victimic tone however can be overcome and a sense of agency can be restored a person's life for example after a serious injury (Cochran & Laub, 1994). This restoration of a sense of agency is described as a process that begins from the initial feelings of entrapment and proceeds often through cycles of progression and regression (Cochran & Laub, 1994).

The transformation of the victimic to an agentic life tone in recovery of occupational functioning receives support from recovery studies of burnout (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015), however this victimic-agentic division alone does not credit the complexity of human agency in the process. Therefore, Bandura's theory of human agency (2001) is adopted in the present study. This theory of human agency (Bandura, 2001, 2006) was chosen since agency is extended from the simple victim-agent-continuum to show how individuals employ different forms of agency, even in situations when a direct exercise of control over the environment is not possible. This theory is especially appropriate for the present study as most of real-life situations especially in the workplace involve different forms of agency and rarely are dependent on the individual alone. Therefore this study relies on Bandura's (2001) detailed description of the human agency to show how agency connects to the drivers of burnout recovery.

The theory of human agency (Bandura, 2001) describes the mechanisms of conscious human functioning, relying on the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2010). The social cognitive theory views people as active agents and coordinators of their behavior, who act in a mutually shaping relationship with their environment. As well as people are products of environment they also participate in producing it. This theoretical framework is well suited for examining the participants and their process of recovery, since it draws attention to how individuals can also influence and affect their proximate environment. The theory of human agency (Bandura, 2001) bases on this

social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2010) and encompasses three forms of agency: *personal*, *proxy* and *collective*. Bandura extends the traditional idea of agency by incorporating forms of proxy and collective agency, and by emphasizing that exercising agency and having a control over one's life is the essence of humanness.

Bandura's notion of *personal agency* (2001) highlights how individuals exercise control over themselves and their environment in order to often produce change. A feature of personal agency unique to humans is self-reflection, which is the action of self-examination to evaluate one's own motivation, values and meaning of life pursuits. While self-reflection might not appear as a feature of personal agency in the traditional sense, it often acts as a basis for other more visible acts of agency people perform. As people engage in self-reflection it might result into aspiring to change some aspects of their lives, which in turn results them to react and motivate themselves to do something else. What is core however to exercising agency is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that individual is capable of influencing and controlling one's course of life (Bandura, 2001) and therefore crucial, because without this belief, agency remains limited.

Bandura's theory of personal agency can explain the effectiveness of some of the drivers of burnout recovery identified in the earlier section, more specifically changing values (Bernier, 1998; Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015) and increasing awareness (Bernier, 1998; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Salminen et al., 2015). Reflecting on one's values is essential to direct one's life to path ones wishes it was going to and improving quality of life. In addition, without self-awareness it is almost impossible to self-reflect, self-react and therefore implement changes. Furthermore, self-efficacy can explain much of what has found to be the core driver of recovery taking control (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Salminen et al., 2015) as self-efficacy represents the belief that one can influence and ultimately produce recovery.

In addition to personal agency, individuals exert control over their lives through *proxy* and *collective* agency (Bandura, 2001, 2006). When individuals do not possess direct control over certain aspirations in their lives, they turn to people who have resources or the expertise to help them reach these aspirations. This is called exercising proxy agency. People might resort to exercising proxy agency, when they do not want to saddle themselves with responsibilities, and rely on other people to get it done for them. Collective agency involves the collaboration of a group of people to achieve something together. The knowledge and skills of the whole group are employed to reach a certain mutual goal. Support, experienced as an important driver of burnout recovery (Bernier, 1998; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015), takes both forms of proxy and collective agency. People might resort to a family member or co-worker with

resources in order to receive help in the aim to decrease burnout, which is a form of proxy agency. People might also commit themselves to a group with a common goal of for example decreasing burnout or lowering workload, which in turn is a form of collective agency, but functions similarly as an attempt to increase wellbeing.

These elaborated forms of agency provide an indication of the complex mechanisms behind human functioning and demonstrate the various ways human beings exert control over their functioning and their surrounding through consciousness. Furthermore, this theory is valuable in offering us guidelines on how to examine the ways to exercise agency in the context of burnout recovery. In the next section, the connection between the change of workplace and job burnout recovery will be examined. Change of workplace can be considered as drastic way to influence the environment, by completely changing the proximate environment of the individual, and therefore can be a strong indication of agency, but on the other hand an easy way out by avoiding to having to change themselves and adapt to the situation.

1.3. Change of workplace

The meaning of workplace change for job burnout recovery is not quite known, even though there have been many studies illustrating a correlative connection between burnout and employee turnover intention (Lee & Ashforth, 1996) and actual employee turnover (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). The commonness of workplace change among burnout individuals was also demonstrated in Schroer's (1993) study, who found that in the Netherlands only 55 % return to the workplace after sick leave due to burnout and only 40 % remained in the workplace a year after. Workplace change seems to be strongly related to the process of job burnout recovery. Most participants in Regedanz's (2008) study quit their jobs during the recovery process and also Bernier (1998) found that her all her recovering participants explored new work possibilities in two ways: investigating about other job or study possibilities and actually trying out different jobs. These findings give support to changing workplace as an essential step in the recovery process. Little academic attention has however been paid to the meaning of the change of workplace to the individual, which might reveal insightful information about what is the reason and significance of the change of workplace.

Leaving or changing workplace can be seen as a way to deal with the causal factors in burnout that are attributed to external situational features, such as lack of support or too high demands (Maslach, 1982). Therefore, changing work can be considered as an intervention for burnout as it

attempts to tackle the causes in burnout (Maslach, 1982; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Both Maslach (1982) and Schaufeli and Enzmann (1998) pay attention to the danger of the job change being “the easy way out” for the individual, without addressing the real reasons behind the burnout. Therefore when changing workplace is an attempt to tackle the causal factors of burnout, the causal factors should be clearly to be attributed to situational characteristics that the individual cannot impact. When external conditions are satisfactory for the individual, it should encourage the individual to learn to deal with the burnout with their own available resources and strategies, and even learn to adapt to the situation. When the external conditions are not satisfactory, the individual feels like they have no other choice than change workplace.

However, in today’s world changing workplace is not self-evident and requires resources. In addition to exploring new possibilities and finding a new workplace, it also requires dealing with insecurity and using a lot of resources to for example confront the manager to quit and then learning the new job and adapting into a new work environment. It is worth noting that exploring work possibilities was the fifth out of six stages in the process of recovery (Bernier, 1998), which implies the process of recovery was closer to its end, individuals had restored health and were feeling empowered. Exploring work possibilities also occurred after the stage of questioning and changing values (Bernier, 1998), which can also be a possible reason for changing work or even career. In the process of burnout recovery, individuals gain more awareness of their values, which might be in conflict with their current job. Increased self-awareness of values has also been linked to a voluntary change of career (Wise & Millward, 2005) and even factors that could be considered as barrier for career change, such as lack of resources, were overcome when pursuing newly discovered values. Therefore, a change of job could be a strong illustration of mental strength and can be seen as a sign of the individual taking control of his or her own recovery and as an act of agency.

Some individuals might resort to completely changing career after experiencing burnout (Cherniss, 1992). In his longitudinal study, Cherniss (1992) also found a connection between early career burnout and later career stability. He theorized several explanations for this connection, one possible explanation being that individuals with positive experiences early in their career became more self-confident and therefore more willing to take risks and face the insecurity of career change. Individuals, who experience early career burnout were in turn more flexible in their thinking (Cherniss, 1992) and believed they might adapt and learn to like the job and therefore gave the job a longer chance. This explanation highlights individual differences in resorting to workplace change: some individual are more willing to give time to the possibility of start liking the job and some are more willing to deal with uncertainty and risks.

However, it is evident that workplace or career changes are not automatic answers for recovery. Adopting a new occupational role has been described both as a negative and positive experience and commonly includes a mix of both emotions (Kidd, 2008), which demonstrates the insecurity involved in the workplace change. On the other hand, the change of workplace can also be an “easy way out”, where individuals do not make necessary changes in the own attitude, thoughts and actions in order to recovery, but attribute the blame to external factors. Change of workplace as a phenomenon related to recovery has many aspects to consider, which this study will aim to investigate.

1.4. The present study

The context of the present study is rehabilitation called “Vitality and energy for working life” funded by The Social Insurance Institution of Finland and aimed for working-aged individuals, who are suffering from different kinds of psychological disorders such as burnout. Research on these Finnish occupational rehabilitation programs has found the rehabilitation to have many positive effects in the participants’ lives (Kurki, 2004; Suoyrjö et al., 2008; Tirkkonen, 2012; Tirkkonen, Kinnunen, & Kurki, 2009), yet several studies have pointed out that the positive effects of the rehabilitation deteriorated after a longer period of time (Kurki, 2004; Suoyrjö et al., 2008; Turja, 2009), which raises a question of the long-term effectiveness of these interventions.

The present study aims to discover what are the drivers significant to maintaining the experience of long-term burnout recovery by exploring the accounts of the four participants following rehabilitation. The four participants of the study had initially benefited from the rehabilitation, but a follow-up survey conducted 1.5 years later revealed that these effects had not persisted for all of them. In order to gain insight into the process, it is also be beneficial to study individuals more closely to follow what drivers work in favor of recovery and what mechanisms inhibit recovery. This type of research design that examines different types of processes of recovery and non-recovery enables gaining a broad view of the recovery process.

This study utilizes narrativity as its methodological framework, which assumes that people understand and make sense of the surrounding world in the form of stories (Bruner, 1991; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2008; Squire, 2008). Narrativity relies here on social constructivism as the larger theoretical framework, which is well suited for studying the experience of the individuals, as it argues for the experience to be constructed by each individual through their

experiences and interactions with the surrounding world (Bruner, 1991; Hänninen, 1999). Because of this study's specific interest of the two-year time period after rehabilitation, Squire's (2008) idea of experience-centered narrative is used, where the narrative is understood as a sequential and meaningful account of experience. Squire (2008) emphasizes narratives reflecting experience rather than events, as narrative represent the interpretations and meanings they have attached to the situation.

Narrativity was chosen as the methodological framework for the present study because of its emphasis on the participant's perspective and its suitability for studying agency. In this narrative study, the interest is in the meanings the participants give to their experience, therefore, this study emphasizes the experience of recovery from the participants' perspective (Riessman, 2008; Squire, 2008). In addition, narrativity allows the individual to express agency in the interview (Pöysä, 2010) and explain reasoning for action (Polkinghorne, 1995), and therefore attribute control to itself or not. In this study all accounts of the participants will be analyzed separately using both abductive content analysis and narrative analysis. The abductive approach, which combines theory and empiricity in a non-linear way, is especially useful in an explorative study (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). As this study adopts an explorative approach, it does make generalizations not to populations but theories (Yin, 2012). In this context, the results will shed light on agency as a driver of recovery. Because of the interest is in the uniqueness of each of participant, a strength is that it is possible to attain a rich and deep view (Frost, 2009) on the role of agency in recovery. Additionally, to attain such a view of the topic, two different analysis methods were applied. Firstly, theory-bound content analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2012) will also be applied in order to illustrate the forms of agencies the individuals express during their narration in the interview. Secondly, a method of narrative analysis (Gergen & Gergen, 1988) will be utilized to represent the narratives of recovery in terms of agency.

The objective of this study is to examine the experience recovery or lack of recovery from job burnout from the participants' perspective, concentrating on the role of agency. Furthermore, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What forms of agency do the participants narrate in their accounts of recovery or non-recovery?
2. How do they narrate role of agency to their (non)recovery?
3. How do they narrate the meaning of the change of workplace to their (non)recovery?

2. METHOD

2.1. Study design and participants

The present study was a part of a longitudinal research project between the University of Jyväskylä and the Rehabilitation Center Peurunka. The research project had also received the approval of the Ethical Committee of the University of Jyväskylä. This study was conducted two years after the individuals' participation in the "Vitality and energy for working life" - rehabilitation in 2012. In 2012, 12 individuals of three different rehabilitation courses showed signs of recovery, by a reduction of at least one class in burnout symptoms during the half-year follow-up period of the rehabilitation and took part in an interview study (see Salminen et al., 2015). An electrical follow-up survey was sent to these 12 participants during the spring 2014 out of which nine participants answered and eight agreed for a follow-up interview. Out of the three participants who did not answer, one was on a longstanding sick leave and therefore had not received the information of the survey and two could not be reached due to changes in personal e-mail contacts.

TABLE 1. Purposeful sampling of the participants.

	Job stayer	Job changer
Recovered	Participant 1 (Eva)	Participant 3 (Laura)
Not recovered	Participant 2 (Maria)	Participant 4 (Katherine)

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select four participants out of these eight to study both recovered and not recovered individuals. The names used for the participants are pseudonyms. The follow-up survey revealed two interesting facts: the positive consequences of the rehabilitation had not persisted for all of the participants. To discover why some individuals had recovered and some not, both recovered and not recovered individuals were chosen for the sample. As change of workplace was also very common among the study participants and recognized also as an important stage of the recovery (Bernier, 1998), it was picked as one variable of interest. Aiming to discover the meaning of the workplace change, two participants, who had changed workplace resulting to two different outcomes: recovery and non-recovery, were chosen. To still highlight other mechanisms behind recovery, two participants that had not changed workplace with the same two outcomes: recovery and non-recovery, were also chosen. This kind of purposeful

sampling of four different participants enables an in-depth qualitative inquiry of the role of agency in different kind of recovery processes.

To measure whether the participants were recovered, the participants' own evaluation of whether burnout had increased or decreased from after rehabilitation was used. However, as burnout scores based on the BBI-15 (Bergen Burnout Indicator 15; Näätänen, Aro, Matthiesen, & Salmela-Aro, 2003) were obtained both at the half-a-year follow-up period of the rehabilitation and at the 1,5 year follow-up survey, they could be compared to the participants' own evaluations of the level of burnout. The comparisons of the participants own evaluations to the burnout scores revealed that the evaluations were in concordance with the change in scores.

The four participants chosen for the study were all women, with ages ranging from 43 to 66 and working in different professions. All except one worked full-time, who was at half retired. Two of the respondents were close to retirement, planning to retire in two years' time. At the time of the interview, three were also on sick leave from work though not for burnout but because of physical reasons. All of the respondents had children, but only one had children living at home.

2.2. Data collection

In narrative methodology the research material consists of the narrated accounts of the studied individuals (Elliott, 2005; Riessman, 2008). In this study, the accounts were produced by interviewing and therefore the material can be conceptualized as told accounts (Riessman, 2008). The interview was a semi-structured interview, where the question themes were chosen beforehand, yet the answers left open. This permitted the themes to be connected to the phenomenon of interest and theoretical framework, yet allowing the individual to describe their experience in their own words (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2012). The questions focused on the time period of two years after rehabilitation and included general descriptions of life both at work and outside work during these two years. The planned questions also addressed participants' agency and their role in different events. The draft of the interview can be found as an appendix (see appendix 1). Before the actual research interviews, three pilot interviews were conducted to two occupational health researchers and one individual recovering from burnout in order to receive feedback on both content of the questions but also practice the act of interviewing.

The willingness to participate in an interview was asked and ensured again from the participants in October 2014. Based on this permission interviews were arranged in their hometowns on dates of

their choice during November and December 2014. The interviews were held in a peaceful and quiet room. Two informed consents were obtained before the interview: the consent to record the interview as well as the consent to use the interview as data for the research purpose. These interviews lasted from 1 h to 1 h 30 min and they were tape-recorded and then transcribed. The transcription was conducted word-for-word including all uttered words, pauses, laughs and resembling “rough transcription”, as Riessman (2008) brought forth. The focus of the analysis was on content of the interviews (Riessman, 2008), not in linguistic ways of speaking in the interviews, which why more specific conversational features like sighs and stresses of speech were left out. In the results section, quotations displayed are translated and neatened from stutters and repetitions of words. The transcribed material was 55 pages long. All of the interviews were conducted, transcribed and analyzed by the same researcher, which eliminates variation between interviews due to the researcher. The close involvement of the researcher in all of the phases of research process permitted a thorough immersion in the research material, and becoming familiar with the data began already in the interviews and further deepened in the transcription.

2.3. Analysis

This study utilizes triangulation of two analysis methods that allow the presentation of data from different perspectives therefore providing a deeper and more multidimensional view of the phenomenon of agency and its connection to job burnout recovery (Frost, 2009). Firstly, content analysis was applied to identify the forms of human agency expressed in the narratives (Bandura, 2001) and secondly, narrative analysis by Gergen and Gergen (1988) was employed to construct the narratives of recovery from the viewpoint of agency The actual analysis process for each participant and its main phases are presented in Figure 1 and will be more specifically explained next.

1. Theory-bound content analysis
(Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2012)

2. Narrative analysis
(Gergen & Gergen, 1988)

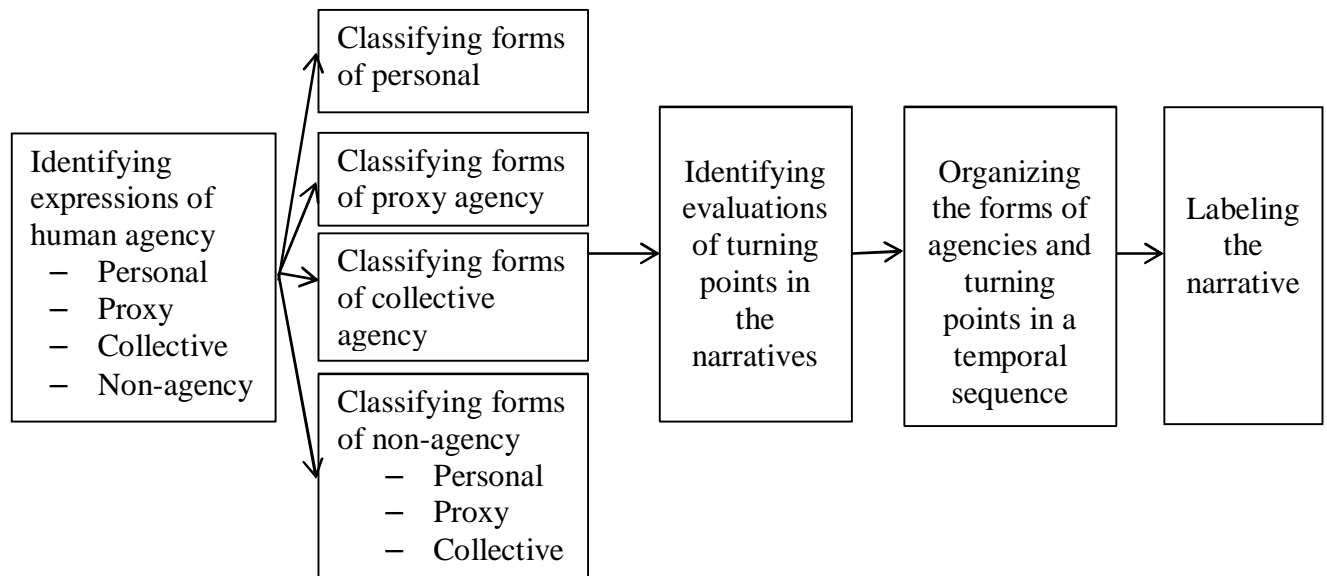


FIGURE 1. The analysis process

Content analysis was chosen because its flexibility and access to deep individual structures such as values and agency, and therefore enabled the detailed identification of the forms of agency in the accounts (Duriiau, Reger, & Pfaffer, 2007). While the main purpose of using content analysis was to identify the forms of agencies, also the frequency of the phrases concerning the a certain form of agency was also counted as it is often considered to indicate importance of the phenomenon to the speaker (Abrahamson & Hambrick, 1997; Duriiau et al., 2007). Content analysis can rarely be completely separated from context or the pre-knowledge the researcher has prior research (Krippendorff, 2004). The presence of theory in analysis has also been acknowledged by categorizing the types of content analysis to data-based, theory-guided and theory-bound content analysis according to the degree the analysis is connected to theory (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2012). In this study theory-guided content analysis will be employed, which has also been called as abductive analysis (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Dubois & Gadde, 2014). The abductive approach analysis highlights the movement between theory and the empirical world, since employing both levels contribute greatly to the understanding of a phenomenon. Theory contributes to the understanding of empirical information, but processing empirical evidence also shows the need for more conceptualization and theories (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). In this study, theory-guided content analysis means that Bandura's (2001) theory of human agency provides the theoretical division for the forms of personal, proxy and collective agency that are recognized.

The analysis was conducted by using a qualitative analysis programme ATLAS.ti in order to keep the material in order, eliminate the chance of miscalculations, be able to record all thoughts and comments along the analysis process and make the analysis process overall more transparent (Jolanki & Karhunen, 2010). The analysis process began by relying on Bandura's (2001) theory of human agency to identify appropriate quotations for analysis. A thorough study of Bandura's (2001) human agency theory was done in order to recognize the three types of agencies, thereafter the data was read repeatedly and thoroughly to highlight appropriate quotations that represented a form of personal, proxy and collective agency. Quotations selected for personal agency represented ways of affecting on either self or others usually also with the aim of increasing own wellbeing or decreasing distress. Similarly, quotations selected for proxy agency included help, support or received resources in some form from other people. Collective agency included quotations describing groups and their positive influence.

Becoming familiar with the data, it quickly became evident that also non-agency was present in the data, more specifically a lack of personal and collective agency. By personal non-agency is meant the individual describing a situation that they expressed had no control over. Personal non-agency resembles therefore to the victimicity described earlier (Bruner, 1994; McAdams, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1995a). Proxy non-agency was when participants expressed an attempt to use proxy agency, by for example asking for help, but failing receive this help, which was also highlighted. By collective non-agency is meant a group working together, but having conflicting aims or beliefs. Quotes were highlighted under the preliminary codes of personal, proxy and collective agency as well as personal, proxy and collective non-agency.

After this preliminary coding process, the quotations were reviewed again to validate that quotation was an expression of agency and that it was placed in the right group. The quotations that had no link to recovery or the aim of increasing wellbeing were dismissed. However the quotations that seemed to have an indirect link to recovery were kept along to see if the same form of agency occurred somewhere else in the interview in order to shed on light on that form. At this point, the aim was not to highlight the significance of agency to recovery, but that comes along with the narrative analysis and the analysis of evaluative shifts the participants made.

The quotations were then classified within the different types of agency to create more specific forms of agencies according to the nature of the action and the situation where the agency was expressed for each participant separately. When recognizing a similar form of agency between several participants, the name of the form was altered to fit both. Therefore, there was going back and forth between the participants before the final forms of agencies were labelled. When the final

forms of agencies were named, all the quotations from the first phase were reviewed just in case there was any quotations left out that would bring something new to the description of the agency.

After analyzing the types of agencies in the accounts, a method of narrative analysis by Gergen and Gergen (1988) was utilized to analyze the overall tone and plot of the narrative. Because of the sampling of participants has been already done according to features in recovery experiences, a paradigmatic analysis of narratives that classifies similar features of stories would not have produced deep enough insight into the process of recovery (Polkinghorne, 1995). This method of narrative analysis is conversely very appropriate as it represents the overall recovery experience, focuses on content rather than structure (Riessman, 2008) and emphasizes the temporal evaluations the participants make in their narration. The purpose of using this narrative analysis was to create a new narrative that plots out the forms of agencies and their significance during the two-year time period after their rehabilitation.

According to Gergen and Gergen (1988) narratives can be classified to different types depending on the tone of the narrative. The tone of the narrative can be called progressive, regressive or stable in terms of whether it is leading towards the valued end point or goal state. Commonly this tone shifts during the narrative, which usually reveals the significance of the certain experiences to the narration. These shifts in tone can be converted to a linear form that represents the type of the narrative Gergen and Gergen (1988) have presented, including comedy, romance, happily-ever-after or tragedy. Romance and comedy are progressive plots that result to a happy ending. Comedy involves a few minor complications, which the narrator overcomes and reaches a happy plateau. Romance involves several regressive-progressive phases, which symbolize greater obstacles the narrator overcomes ultimately resulting a happy ending. A happily-ever-after narrative results to a stable and lastingly joyful end. Tragedy represents a regressive plot, which includes a collapse. The narrative can also be stable with possibly some minor fluctuations, but ultimately representing a quite stable linear form.

Essential to whether a narrative's plot can be called progressive or regressive is the value the narrator puts on to different experiences and the end point that they lead to, which again emphasizes using the evaluations the participant makes in assessing the significance of the forms of agencies. Employing a method of narrative analysis in evaluating the importance of the agency is an advantage, because analyzing causal relations based on only the forms of agency individuals narrate do not provide an accurate representation of reality, as narrated agency and intention does not always lead to actual behavior and intended consequence (Bruner, 1991). Therefore, a critical phase in this method of analysis was identifying the evaluations the participants made for the specific forms of agencies as a means of achieving the valued end point, which most commonly were

restoring health and recovering from burnout. The forms of agencies, their evaluations and other significant evaluative shifts were then organized in a temporal sequence. This organized temporal sequence of agencies and evaluations form out a new narrative, which show the role of agency in the progression or regression in the plot. This narrative was then labeled and classified according to Gergen's and Gergen's (1988) typology.

3. RESULTS

The presentation of results will follow the order of research questions presented earlier. Firstly, the forms of agency the four women narrated in their interviews analysed by content analysis will be described. Secondly, the constructed narratives of the four women Eva, Maria, Laura and Katherine will be presented and how they narrated the significance of the different forms of agencies in their narratives of recovery or non-recovery. Connected to the presentation of the narratives, the third research question of the meaning of change of workplace will be answered, by analysed the meaning of it for the two women Laura and Katherine. Lastly, the narratives of the women will be reviewed and labelled as according to the Gergen's & Gergen's (1988) typology.

3.1. The forms of agencies

3.1.1. *Personal agency as an enabler for recovery*

Personal agency was defined as a way of influencing either self or the environment in order to improve wellbeing. Personal agency arose as an important driving mechanism in the successful narratives of recovery.

TABLE 2. Forms of personal agency

Form	Frequency
Reflecting on own values and goals	27
Self-interest	21
Taking responsibility of own recovery	18
Self-observing and self-awareness	16
Changing attitude towards work	15
Taking care of others	15
Understanding stressful situations	13
Change of workplace	8
Having excessive responsibility	4
Trying to make others understand	3

Reflecting own values and goals was the most mentioned form of personal agency. The reflection of values and goals seemed to act as a base for implementing changes, especially for the recovered individuals. This self-reflection resulted to recognizing the important things in life and determining what is the end point they want to reach. Another important form of personal agency that was experienced as a prerequisite for implementing changes and the others forms of agencies was *increased self-observing and self-awareness* in regard mostly to the physical wellbeing. In order to be able to implement changes which would enable recovery, the participants expressed an understanding other their needs and limits, which was achieved through self-observing. Self-observing was furthermore mentioned as a skill often learnt at rehabilitation and described as very important in the purpose of observing bodily signs and supervising their wellbeing. Both reflection of goals and values and observing bodily signs was related to an overall increased self-awareness, which together acted as base for the other forms of agencies.

Self-reflection and self-observing were not alone always sufficient for recovery, but it required ultimately *taking responsibility of their own recovery*. Taking responsibility of own recovery was evident in how the participants recognized and acknowledged their responsibility in incorporating thoughts, attitudes and behaviours necessary for recovery. *Self-interest* involved a similar self-oriented mindset than taking responsibility of own recovery, but self-interest involved more strongly the behavioural components of this mindset and consisted of actual behaviours by which the participants prioritized their own needs before others'. The women expressed prioritizing their needs in many ways, such as pursuing things that are important to them individually at work, not giving in in conflict situations and even leaving from the workplace. In the accounts of the recovered individuals, the realization of the important things in life and their responsibility in achieving recovery resulted to a *changed attitude towards work*. A realization of what was important in life, such as family and preserving health, also resulted to a more merciful attitude towards themselves and work.

Understanding stressful situations differs from the previous forms of agencies that it is more connected to the situation and environment. A way to try to decrease distress the stressful situations caused was rationalizing and finding a reason for the occurrence. The women brought forth situations such as lack of resources and conflicts, but then rationalized them by attributing it to the pressure of the economic situation and the reality that everyone cannot simply get along. The participants conveyed they also tried to exercise this understanding in their daily life, by trying always to find the positive sides of the situation. *Changing workplace* was another way of dealing

with situational stressors as well as a change they implemented in order to recover, which will be further analysed separately later, as it is one research question.

While all of the forms of personal agency had the purpose of trying to increase own wellbeing or reduce distress, three forms of agencies were not very successful in improving wellbeing, namely *taking care of others*, *trying to make the others understand the situation* and *taking excessive responsibility*. These forms of personal agencies were also tried to use as strategies to cope with stressful situations, however not always leading to positive consequences. A common stressful situation was an illness or worsened health condition of a family member that participants tried to help or monitor, which was however stressful. This taking care can be seen as a way of dealing with the stress that the situation causes, and therefore the use of personal agency does not alone cause stress but rather the situation they were trying to influence. However, trying to make others understand and taking excessive responsibility were not always the most effective ones in relieving the distress of the situation, which is why a distinction can be made between effective and ineffective forms of personal agency.

3.1.2. Proxy agency as an enabler of recovery

All of the participants mentioned exercising proxy agency in various different ways. The help received from *rehabilitation* and *health care professionals* was tightly connected to the recovery of burnout, as they provided actual tools for recovery. At work the participants told that they exercised proxy agency through their *manager*, *colleagues*, *subordinates* and by *new staff*. At home, the participants received help from their *husband and their family* and their *dog*.

TABLE 3. Forms of proxy agency

Form	Frequency
Rehabilitation	16
Help from manager	9
Help from health care professionals	8
New staff	5
Relying on colleagues/ subordinates	5
Husband's and/or family's help	3
Dog	3

Rehabilitation and *health care professionals* were mentioned as important forms of proxy agency, as they provided information about burnout and strategies to deal with the burnout and support, which functioned as actual tools for recovery. The *manager* had an important role in creating order and providing a sense of security, which received significance usually after experiences with bad managers. Appreciation was expressed for the manager in creating a good structure, work atmosphere or helping otherwise at some point in their interviews. *Getting new staff* at the workplace and being able to *rely on colleagues* were concrete ways of easing the workload and therefore distress. Participants also expressed that merely knowing that they can receive help from others when they need it or merely knowing that colleagues/subordinates are skilful and competent, reduced distress.

Proxy agency was also visible in the help the women received during their free time at home. *Husbands* were described as an important source of psychological support as well as a concrete help at home. Also other family members, like their own children, took care of their parents. Furthermore, walking the *dog* was brought up as very beneficial to recovery. It was a routine that could not be left, activating the participants and providing a way to wind down during the day.

3.1.3. Collective agency supporting recovery

Proxy and collective agency are very close to each other in many ways. The forms of proxy agency explained above were very concrete ways of easing workload or provided ways of decreasing distress. Exercising collective agency similarly involves other people in improving wellbeing, however doing it more collectively with others in a group.

TABLE 4. Forms of collective agency

Form	Frequency
Collective atmosphere at work	18
Collective atmosphere at rehabilitation	8
Exercising in a group	3
Caretaking of a family member	1

Collective atmosphere at work was mentioned as an aspect that contributes to wellbeing at work. Co-operation and collaboration in the work community to reach a common goal was very important and meaningful to some, while some valued the social aspects of being part of a group and the workplace as a social environment. This collective agency gave joy to the work and

therefore contributed significantly to their wellbeing. *Collective atmosphere at rehabilitation* provided strongly the feeling that they are not alone in their suffering. The group spirit was even raised as the most important aspect of rehabilitation, and pointed out that it was the good spirit of the group that made the rehabilitation successful. Two other forms of collective agency were also evident, which exemplify the advantages of the different forms of collective agency in peoples' lives. Firstly, *exercising in a group* was something significant to wellbeing. Secondly, taking turns with siblings *in taking care and visiting their aged parent*, which has diffused her responsibility, which she experienced as being very heavy.

While the participants described many forms of collective agency that were beneficial for recovery, the forms of collective agency did not seem to drive the recovery forward in the same way as personal and proxy agency did, but rather act as supporting structures that brought joy to the lives of the participants. Personal and proxy agency alone yet were not alone sufficient in explaining recovery or lack of it, but the participants narrated also situations of non-agency that were related into worsened wellbeing. These situations will be reviewed in the next section.

3.1.4 Forms of non-agency hindering recovery

The participants narrated situations where they felt they did not have any way to exercise control over the situation (lack of personal agency), situations, where they were tried to resort to someone with resources, but did not receive it (lack of proxy agency) and also situations, where they would have needed a group effort but failed to receive this (lack of collective agency) were described. These forms of personal, proxy and non-collective agency will be reviewed next.

TABLE 5. Forms of personal non-agency

Form	Frequency
Health problems	25
Pressure of the economic situation in society	12
Workload and short of staff	12
Too much change and new things to learn	10
Hearing too many complaints at work	9
Too much bureaucracy	5

The most common form of personal non-agency was dealing with *health problems*. All of the participants had experienced problems with both their own health and a family member's health during the last two years, which were experienced as a source of distress and as something they had little control over. Dealing with their own health problems was not however as distressing as dealing with a family member's illness or health problems. The illnesses their family members experienced were however also more serious and life threatening than the ones the participants self encountered. The illnesses fortunately relieved along the narrative, which had a positive effect on the participants' wellbeing. All continued however to bear worry in some extent about the condition of their closest ones, which also is a form of personal agency that we reviewed earlier.

The *pressure of the economic situation* is also strongly present in three narratives. This pressure affects their lives in three different ways: firstly the decreased funding received from outside sources, secondly the inability/insecurity of changing workplace or industry and thirdly, the excessive *workload and insufficient amount of staff*. The heavy workload and insufficient amount of staff was a very significant source of distress, which is why it was also raised as its own class. Partially also resulting from the pressure of economic situation and the workload, there was having *to hear too many complaints* from both clients and co-workers that has affected wellbeing at work. Dealing with customers' complaints was described as a time-taking and exhausting portion of work. The complaining of colleagues was in turn depicted as exhausting and creating a negative atmosphere instead of a refreshing one.

Also two other forms of personal non-agency related to work practices were expressed. Firstly, there was too much change, which was experienced as overwhelming, as it led to constantly having to learn new things and adapting, which took too much time and resources. Secondly, a depiction of too much bureaucracy at work was conveyed, which was described as inevitable and taking too much time away from actual work. These two forms of non-agency are very representative of situations where individuals feel their work is out of their control.

While personal non-agency included situations they could not impact, proxy and collective non-agency included situations the individual felt they could have impacted through others, but others failed to provide this impact, whether it was through expertise, help or collectivity.

TABLE 6. Forms of proxy and collective non-agency

Form	Frequency
Proxy	
Not receiving help from manager	11
Not receiving help from co-workers	9
Collective	
Lack of collective atmosphere	9
Inequality of resource distribution	3

Two forms of proxy non-agency were identified in the interviews. Proxy non-agency was defined as the participant's attempt to resort to someone with resources in order to ease their own distress, but this person not responding or failing to provide with resources. Most commonly this type of non-agency occurred *with the manager*. Dissatisfaction with the manager arose when the manager did not provide enough introduction, enough help and support, did not take care of things in an ethical manner and was not able to manage a big group of people. Proxy non-agency with colleagues occurred in similar ways as with the manager: *not receiving help from a colleague* when asked for, no colleague offering to substitute and not having competent enough substitute/colleagues. This increased the workload and responsibility of the participants and therefore had a big impact on the wellbeing of the participant.

Collective non-agency occurred at work when there was a feeling of *lack of collective atmosphere*. This was evident by the participants' expression of desiring a more collective atmosphere, co-operation and appreciation towards one another. In addition to lack of collective atmosphere, the participants experienced *inequality* in how resources were distributed. The unfair distribution of resources concerned for example, hiring substitutes, which was a privilege granted to some but not others. This also gave the feeling that their work was not as important and fractured the collective atmosphere at work.

3.2. The narratives

In this section the narratives of the four women will be presented. Eva and Maria both have worked for their current organization for the most of their working career and are now close to retirement. Although their situations resemble each other, the outcomes of their narratives are very different. Eva feels she is recovered, while Maria does not. Laura and Katherine still have more time to retirement. They have both resorted to workplace change during their process of recovery, yet with different outcomes. Katherine has changed workplace twice, yet she experiences she has still not fully recovered from burnout. Laura on the other hand feels like she is recovered. Next, their narratives will be presented in terms of the forms of agencies they express based on the above presented content analysis results and what they evaluated as the significant to their recovery or non-recovery. Table 7 sums what forms of recovery were present in each participant's narrative.

TABLE 7. Forms of agencies in each participant's narrative

Participant	<u>Forms of personal agency</u>	<u>Forms of proxy agency</u>	<u>Forms of collective agency</u>	<u>Forms of non-agency</u>
Eva - Recovered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility of own recovery • Self-interest • Self-observing and self-awareness • Understanding stressful situations • Changing attitude towards work • Reflecting on own values and goals • Taking care of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation • New staff • Help from health care professionals • Relying on colleagues/ subordinates • Husband's or family's help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation • Work 	Personal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health problems • Pressure of the economic situation in society
Maria - Not recovered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to make others understand • Taking care of others • Reflecting own values and goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation • Help from manager • New staff • Husband's or family's help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation • Work • Exercising in a group 	Personal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health problems • Pressure of the economic situation in society • Workload and short of staff • Too much change and new things to learn • Hearing too many complaints at work Proxy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not receiving help from manager • Not receiving help from co-workers Collective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequality in resource distribution
Laura - Recovered - Changed workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility of own recovery • Self-interest • Self-observing and self-awareness • Understanding stressful situations • Changing attitude towards work • Change of workplace • Taking care of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation • Help from manager • New staff • Husband's or family's help • Dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation • Work 	Personal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health problems Proxy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not receiving help from manager • Not receiving help from co-workers Collective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequality in resource distribution
Katherine – not fully recovered - changed workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility of own recovery • Self-interest • Understanding stressful situations • Reflecting on own values and goals • Change of workplace • Having excessive responsibility • Taking care of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation • Help from manager • Relying on colleagues/ subordinates • Dog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation • Work • Taking care of a family member 	Personal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health problems • Pressure of the economic situation in society • Workload and short of staff • Too much change and new things to learn • Too much bureaucracy Proxy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not receiving help from manager • Not receiving help from co-workers Collective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of collective atmosphere

3.2.1 The discovery of personal agency: From workaholism to finding balance

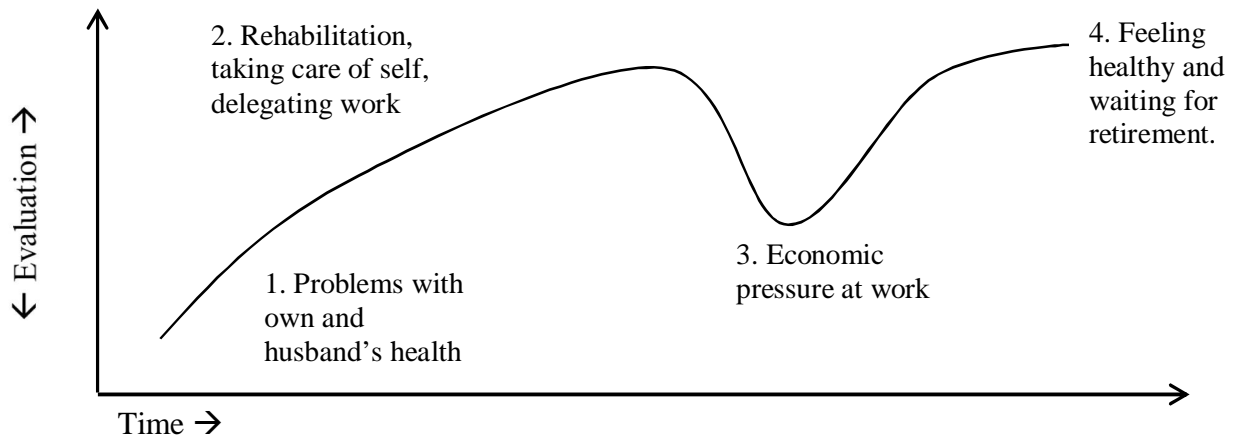


FIGURE 2. Eva's narrative in linear form

Eva's narrative begins with different forms of non-agency. Before rehabilitation she was under a lot of work pressure and experienced problems with her health. Also her husband had problems with his health and she expresses being very worried and distressed at this time. As the narrative proceeds, she learns to observe signs of wellbeing and take care of herself and thus the recovery slowly begins. Three areas of personal agency are repeatedly mentioned in her account of recovery: taking responsibility of her recovery, increased self-awareness of bodily signs and giving up her workaholism. She realized she must observe bodily signs to maintain her health and recover. Furthermore, she has re-evaluated her values, prioritized health and family, delegated her workload and given up her workaholism, which she feels was essential for recovery. Eva admitted that work was number one priority before, but that she had changed her attitude towards work.

" Somehow I learned the rhythm there. That I sort of don't have to do it all that I can delegate work too .. I have been feeling way better now that I haven't been trying gather all the work "

Eva reflected on her values and priorities, where work was earlier number one. However now that both she and her family members had problems with health, she realized the importance of health and family and wanted to retire in time in order to take care of health and spend time with her family.

“(Is the reason more that you want to retire from your job or that you want to experience other things?) It’s the other things. I want to exercise more. And then my husband, who has the illness, so that we would have more time together and with the grandchildren too.”

Taking responsibility of recovery and self-interest are also evident in situations, where she is asked to delay her retirement, but she prioritizes her own wellbeing before it.

“I’ve done my final decision that I won’t give in even though everybody has tried to change my mind. Of course they’re used to me and I’ve done my job well and the finances are in good shape. But nevertheless, I think you have to be selfish and think about yourself too.”

Eva also expresses appreciation for the support she received rehabilitation and her occupational health care, as they helped her realize the importance of monitoring and taking control of their own wellbeing. Also collective agency is present throughout Eva’s account. She states they have a good work atmosphere and everyone works together towards a common goal in their project-oriented work. However, Eva accounts the increase in personal agency as the ultimate reason behind her recovery. While rehabilitation provided the ground for learning to deal with the burnout, she says it is ultimately up to her to actually learn and implement these things in her life.

“I think that it ultimately begins from yourself, so that I have learned it the hard way. I even use the word giving up and giving up work to others. I have somehow just learnt it and realized that if you don’t do it like that you will burnout. This is what I think has just hit home with me”

What furthermore strengthens the idea that personal agency enables recovery, is how the forms of non-agency worsen Eva’s wellbeing. Both the bad economic situation and Eva’s husband’s illness regress Eva’s recovery. Mid-way during her narrative, while the recovery process was already in good progress, she experiences economic pressure that damages her personal agency, which has a bad effect on her.

“But then it [well-being] went backwards a bit, when it was a mental struggle with the decisions. And when you can’t impact on them, but it’s the politicians and the city officials that decide, so you can’t really impact. So there it went backwards a bit.”

On the other hand, Eva finds a way to understand the economic situation, which increases her wellbeing and proves the role of personal agency in her narrative. Eva sees her future as positive. Retirement is waiting ahead, which she is very happy about even though she acknowledges the meaning work has had to her. A few question marks of her and her husband's health exist, but she is also happy about the increased time she has for taking care of herself and for her family.

3.2.2 The narrative of non-agency: In the midst of constant change and increasing demands

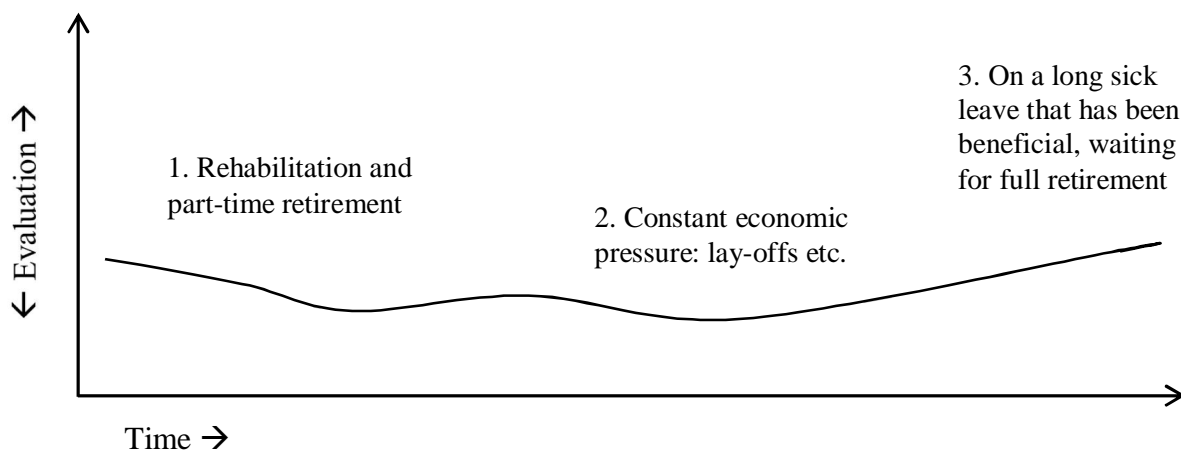


FIGURE 3. Maria's narrative in linear form

Like the others, Maria benefits from rehabilitation. Another positive event for Maria's wellbeing soon after the rehabilitation is that she becomes part-time retired. Maria nevertheless describes being very exhausted after the workdays. Maria's narrative is accompanied with different forms of non-agency, the pressure of the economic situation being the most prominent and evident one. The pressure of the economic situation seems to cause a cycle of non-agencies, beginning from the pressure to save, to short-handed staff, increased workload, stress, customer complaints and negative atmosphere at work.

“All these changes that have happened at work, for example now we have to save a lot of money and just yesterday when I had a discussion [the boss] said we still need to save half a salary somewhere. Not necessarily from my salary but from somewhere we still need to save that this year. So we're not taking any substitutes, so that's our way of saving and it just really stresses me that you constantly have to work short-handed.”

The pressure to save becomes very visible in the everyday work-life, resulting to not hiring substitutes and even leading to temporary layoffs that Maria was also on during the end summer. This shortage of staff results also to a large workload, which Maria finds very exhausting.

“Sometimes there’s even a two hour line to customer service. It’s just one person receiving them, so it is very stressing. And people complain nowadays a lot.”

The large workload in turn leads to a lot of complaints from customers, which Maria mostly deals with and finds it a stressing and time-taking part of her day.

“And when the people have to wait on the phone, then it takes first half a minute of phone call when they say that they have had to wait for 15 minutes. If they left out just that it would save me many half a minutes a day when every single one complains about that. So it is really stressing even though you try to explain that it is just a certain amount of people answering while there is much more people calling.”

The quotation reveals also how Maria tries to cope with the situation by trying to make the people understand the situation, which however does not seem to considerably ease distress for her.

The economic pressure, the shortage of staff and the increased workload have also contributed to a stressed out atmosphere at work. There is a lot of complaining during breaks, while Maria would try to relax and talk about positive things. Even now that she is on sick leave, colleagues have called her, which she finds very distressing.

“Colleagues have contacted me now that there have been conflicts at work. They’ve poured their hearts out to me and we’ve thought about it together. And I’ve thought about it alone too. So it’s been a bit stressing, even though I understand that it has been a relief for them that they get to talk about it. So it’s sort of been both stressing but also a good thing that I could help somebody and listen.”

This quotation also sheds light on why she does listen to the complaints of her work mates. On the other hand the complaints are causing her stress, but on the other hand she cares for the wellbeing of her colleagues. Her colleagues are close friends of long period of time and they even exercise and take care of their wellbeing together even outside work, which are one of the positive aspects of her work.

Even though the negative evaluations of the different forms of non-agency are most visible in the narrative, Maria describes many positive things that have occurred in the last two years. In addition to the joy her work mates provide to her, Maria describes several forms of proxy agencies that she evaluates as having a positive impact. The rehabilitation and the half-retirement that occurred in the beginning of her narrative were described as very positive things for her wellbeing. In addition, a year after rehabilitation, Maria's husband retired, which has helped Maria's workload at home. Recently, her previous boss that was working for a project for four years came back during Maria's sick leave, and Maria is even waiting to get back to work. Maria evaluated the substitute boss as not being as capable of running a big unit, demonstrating some lack of proxy agency.

Maria's interview is interesting, because the pressure of the environment poses a very strong sense of non-agency on her. Maria expresses personal agency in the form that she tries to affect others by for example in customer complaints situations, she seems to lack some of the beneficial form of personal agencies, namely self-interest and taking responsibility of recovery. Furthermore, she does not pursue self-interest and exit the situations that have a negative impact on her but seems in some way trapped in the non-agency.

As Maria does not have effective strategies in improving her wellbeing, the narrative is coloured by a tone of lack of control and non-agency. Maria names as the reasons for her lack of recovery aspects in her job she has not been able to deal with.

“(Could you name a few main reasons why you feel that you haven't fully recovered?) Well it's the increase of workload, learning new things and working short-handed. All these things at least and then these conflicts about the salaries of the substitutes. And listening to people complain all the time. It is really exhausting. I mean we can't do anything about it.”

However, Maria's strategy to decrease exhaustion and regain energy relies on focusing on the future.

“I always say to myself that when I get through these two weeks, then I'm off for two weeks again. My husband is retired so then we can do whatever we want to for two weeks and just do things we like. That is my way of keeping up my energy, doing the ten work days and then two weeks of vacation.”

The comfort of knowing that soon she will be on vacation helps her get through the working period. This is also seems to be her long-term strategy and she reassures herself to just keep on going a

couple of more years and that hope lies in future. Retirement can ultimately provide a happy ending for her narrative.

3.2.3. The narrative of supported agency: From pleading for help to regained joy and spirit

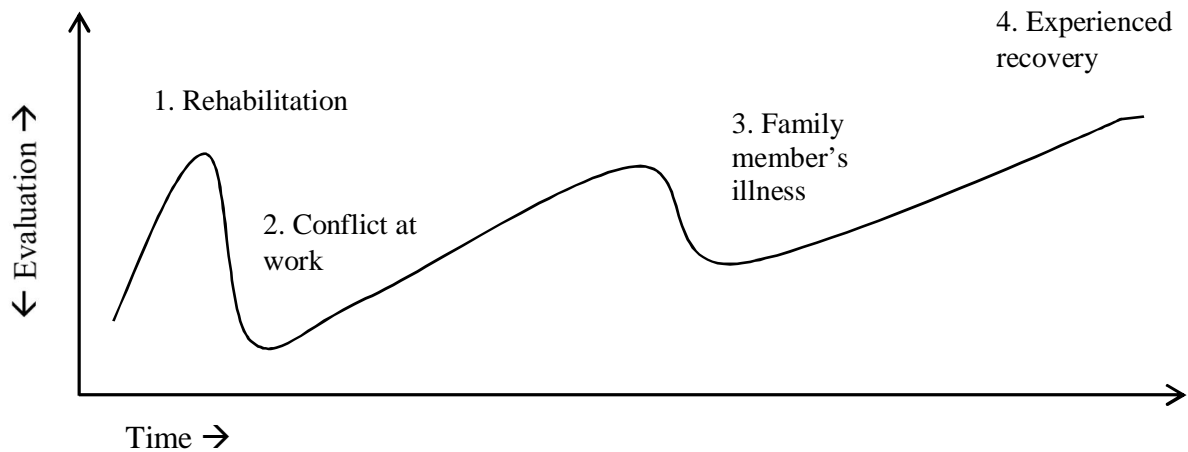


FIGURE 4. Laura's narrative in linear form.

Laura's narration begins with the first rehabilitation period, which she evaluates as being very useful. However, a conflict at work between the two rehabilitation periods changes the tone of the narrative and decreases dramatically Laura's wellbeing for a while. Before the incidence, Laura had repeatedly asked for help with her workload, but failed to receive it. Suddenly, the person who had denied her help, was facing the threat of having to leave the job, and then organized the things so that this person could stay. Laura felt this was unjust, so she stood her grounds and wanted to bring forward the issues she felt was not fair.

“So then I said to the person in charge that I would like to discuss this matter that I think this is a bit unfair for me that the person who has constantly said that there is no money and resources but now that her job is on the line then suddenly we have money. And then when this person // made her own interpretations of our conversation and then it just got out of hand. She started yelling to me, like I suggest you leave this place and just totally inappropriate things, which didn't really affect me as I felt that I wasn't wrong or hadn't done any harm to anyone, just bringing forward my own opinions. But then when she suggested leaving I just thought well, okay, I'm going to go then.”

The inability to exercise proxy agency already in the beginning of her recovery process, where Laura tries to ask for help, stresses the importance of being able to exercise proxy agency later on. Even though there is lack of proxy agency, Laura's personal agency in the form of self-interest is still strong. Laura does not submit to this treatment but defends her rights, which leads to the conflict described above, which in turn led to an unbearable situation at work and her wellbeing decreases. Laura describes the beginning of her process of recovery in the following way:

“First there was rise, like that it was going to start well, but then happened a total breakdown. Like at point zero, and then from that it was slowly the way up again. So that was a bit unfortunate event then”

The quotation reveals that after the conflict her situation improved. After the breakdown, she received help from different health care professionals, whom she discussed with about her vocational future, exploring together options for even changing occupation, but eventually ending up to applying to a few positions that in the end do not lead anywhere.

Laura expressed the will to change job because of the unbearable atmosphere also to her manager. The manager was an important enabler of workplace change, which she was grateful about.

“It was mid-January when my manager asked if I want to work at another place. That there is this opportunity now to change with a four months trial and it begins in the beginning of February. And I said well if you let me go, I will go and try it out. And I give him 10 points for organizing that and discussing it and enabling it for me. He/she could've been like no we are not going to let her go and I would have never heard of that opportunity.”

The change of workplace overall resulted to positive consequences and feelings of recovery. The work was similar to her previous one and the work community was welcoming, which provided a safe environment to finally implement the things she learnt at rehabilitation. Laura explains how the rehabilitation enabling her to make many positive changes in her life.

“(Has there been any changes during these last two years concerning your own behaviour and thoughts?) Hmm. I don't know. I've maybe increased the amount of exercise and lost weight 10 kilos. (Wow, that's a lot.) I've just taken a grip on my life. And simultaneously with the burnout, I got the diagnosis for the underactive thyroid, which is in balance now. All the tips I got there at the

rehabilitation centre, concerning the balance and so, have given me strength and courage and the attitude to take better care of myself. “

The proxy agency Laura was able to exercise in the beginning of her narrative through the rehabilitation, health care professionals and her manager, enabled a fruitful ground for developing various forms of personal agency. She takes responsibility of her life, changes her attitude towards work and learns to observe her bodily signs.

“I don’t have nearly as much stress from the things I haven’t done as I had before. The work will be done when there is time. (Before you had stress from it?) Before I had. It sort of went around in cycles, like I still have this, this, this and this to do. Just stressing about the things I haven’t done. Now not so much, it doesn’t bother me as much. (How did this change happen then?) Maybe I’ve just realized that I’m not the almighty, that I simply don’t have time to do everything.”

There has been a shift in her thinking and attitude towards life and herself. Another aspect that seems to be beneficial for her is learning to observe bodily signs and the need of rest, which rehabilitation gave her tools for. As the main reasons for her recovery, Laura lists different forms of proxy agency and the successful change of workplace.

“First of course the sick leave and all the treatment I got from occupational health care. I had either a nurse, doctor or psychologist appointment every week, so I wasn’t left alone in bed. So that’s absolutely the first. And then the dog, was my sick leave’s company. Really good. And then the rehabilitation. I can recommend to it everyone in the same situation. // Then the support of family and friends. I had really great friends at the previous workplace and they sent me postcards and everything. So there were some positive things there too, or there was a lot of them, but that support is really important. And now this new workplace and that it is a good workplace. That’s without a doubt a really good thing. But if I would’ve changed to a bad place, or even worse place, then I don’t know where I would be, if I would be recovered.”

Viewing Laura’s narrative it becomes clear why Laura describes the forms of proxy and collective agency as beneficial for recovery. Personal agency in the form of self-interest is present throughout the narrative and was not alone a driver for recovery. However proxy agency provided her tools for increased self-awareness, changing attitude towards work, taking responsibility for recovery and of course changing workplace, which had substantial positive consequences for her

wellbeing. The lack of proxy and collective agency are not evident longer in the end of the narrative, which reinforce Laura’s evaluation of the successful workplace change. Laura reacts to her future positively. She feels positively about staying in her current workplace and sees herself staying there for the next five ten years.

3.2.4. The continuous struggle for support: The burden of excessive responsibility

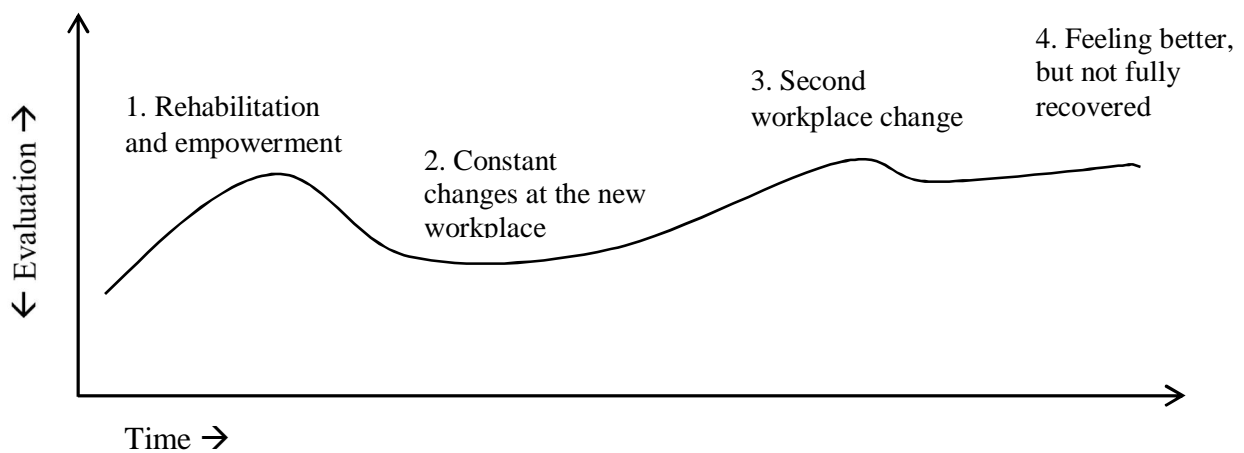


FIGURE 5. Katherine’s narrative in linear form.

The beginning of Katherine’s narrative is very promising, and the rehabilitation is effective in giving her a boost and starting to exercise personal agency. At the rehabilitation she became aware of how burnt out she really was and began planning changes and setting goals together with the staff.

“During the first period we thought about the goals and what each one has when they come to next period. One preliminary goal for me was that I would get into the process of applying for a new job and then the best alternative would be that I would already have the new job.”

Katherine furthermore achieves the goal of changing job already between the rehabilitation periods. She did not only get a new job but also moved town, which was a big demonstration of personal resources and a strong indication of taking responsibility of recovery. Throughout her narration, Katherine demonstrates acknowledgement that she is the one keeping her limits and responsible for own recovery.

“I can say that I’m not yet in full strength. There are still some little things, what I’m trying to do to myself. You just have to keep your boundaries and it’s really up to you to take care that you won’t fall there again.”

However Katherine’s wellbeing does not dramatically improve with the first workplace change. The reason for the first change was the constant change at her old workplace and her being the only one who stayed and which put huge responsibility on her. This reason was not fixed in the new workplace either, which was also in a constantly changing state. Both staff and the manager changed often and the different units were physically separated, which made co-operation harder.

“It [the workplace] was sort in its beginning, there was a lot of changes and a lot of things being redone. // It just felt like the changes continued continued and continued, and there was a lot of change with staff too.”

Katherine also expressed a wish for receiving better training when she began working, since the new workplace had a lot of practices and bureaucracy new to her. Katherine was also forced to find out and learn about this herself, since there was little support from the manager and a lack of collaboration.

“The feeling I had at my previous job was that there was no support whatsoever from my manager, which also was at the job even before that. So when something came up that I should’ve taken forward, I got this feeling that I don’t even want to go there. So I was very alone with these things.”

“We haven’t really had a work community, everybody is just in their own little circle. You didn’t really get that feeling – it was sort of a feeling of not belonging anywhere. It was just everybody working alone, and every group did their own thing and had their own things. We could’ve have done things together much more.”

The combination of the lack of proxy agency and collective agency and the non-agency of too much irrelevant bureaucracy affects her wellbeing.

One significant experience however boosted her second change of workplace. When she received a new competent work pair, whom she could have finally shared responsibility with, this person was suddenly transferred to another unit and a new person with no experience came in

replace. At this time, approximately a year after rehabilitation, her wellbeing worsened considerably.

“When I found out that the person who was supposed to be my new partner had no experience whatsoever, I just got this feeling like I’m starting from zero again”

Katherine resorts to proxy agency in order to get the chance to improve her well-being.

“I contacted occupational health care myself that time and just said that I am absolutely empty of energy, that I can’t in any way, my motivation is zero right now and then I was on a three-week sick leave.”

The significance of the event for Katherine is also evident in the following quotation.

“If that situation would have gone like it was supposed to, that she would have come back and we could have worked as a work pair then maybe I wouldn’t have gone anywhere”

Katherine hears of an opening temporary position through her networks, which she grabbed and began in the autumn. The new place is better than the first, with a capable boss and a collective atmosphere. However, the problem still is that she has too much responsibility, because of the partially incompetent colleagues, which is why Katherine feels she is not fully recovered.

“(Can you name one or a few main reasons that have held back your full recovery?) I think it is exactly that in the end I’ve been responsible for everything by myself. If I would have had an equal colleague in both of the workplaces, which was the impression I had, whom with I could have shared responsibility with but, it has been more up to me. So that has definitely taken more than it has given.”

Even though Katherine presents many forms of personal agency, including acknowledging her responsibility in recovery and reflection of values and goals, the lack of proxy agency is a feature that has prevented her from recovering. The reason for her lack of recovery seems to be the lack of proxy agency and the ability to share responsibility.

In addition to having to bear a huge responsibility at work, Katherine also describes how the worry and responsibility over her aging mother has also affected her wellbeing.

“She is starting to be really old, and all these things related to her wellbeing, and if she can stay there [nursing home]. So I have to bear responsibility for that. (You feel like that has affected your wellbeing?) It has in one sense. Because it’s not exactly a vacation when you go there. “

Even though Katherine described a collective agency among her siblings about taking care of her mother, she still has the main responsibility, which she feels has affected her wellbeing.

Therefore, while she still says she has some work to do with her wellbeing because of all the struggles she has had to the past two years, she says she is doing better than two years ago. It seems her recovery is still in process, and the future outcome is open. She reflects on her goals and aspirations very often during the interview and plans to improve wellbeing. These plans include possibly changing workplace because of her dissatisfaction in the current place.

“I have this feeling that this won’t be my final place either, as there is not coming changes, but it’s going to continue like that for the next couple of years.”

In addition, she is also planning a move with the area and taking better care of herself when her health problems alleviate, which indicate that her recovery is still in process. She also has careful dreams about even changing her profession.

“On the other hand I would like to do something completely else. I’ve been in this career for so long, so I have this dream that I could do something else. But I still haven’t come up what it is what I want to do when I grow up.”

The pressure of the economy keeps her working but also in her current profession, as she knows she will always be employed in that field. What is interesting is that even though she admits she has work to do with recovery, she expresses some satisfaction with the situation. She feels that is characteristic of her to live in certain insecurity and that in a certain way she is satisfied with situation.

“I think it is more me that there is a bit of question marks. // I even changed from a permanent job to a temporary job // I sort of have this where I don’t want to commit myself to anything, but rather experience and move freely.”

Therefore even though full recovery has not been established, she is quite satisfied with her situation. Her wellbeing has improved during the two years even though she has not completely recovered which she self attributes to the unavailability of support both at work and in her personal life.

3.3. Labelling the narratives according to agency

Finally, a summary of the forms of agencies evaluated significant to the outcome and the labelled narratives of the women will be presented in Table 8.

TABLE 8. The labelled narratives

	Forms of agency significant to outcome	Labeled narrative	Story line (Gergen & Gergen, 1988)
Eva	Taking responsibility of own recovery Changing attitude towards work	The discovery of personal agency: <i>From workaholism to finding balance</i>	Romance
Maria	Pressure of the economic situation in society Workload and short of staff Too much change and new things to learn Hearing too many complaints at work	The narrative of non-agency: <i>In the midst of constant change and increasing demands</i>	Stable
Laura	Rehabilitation Help from health care professionals Husband's or family's help Dog Change of workplace	The narrative of supported agency: <i>From pleading for help to regained joy and spirit</i>	Romance
Katherine	Not receiving help from manager Not receiving help from co-workers	The continuous struggle for support: <i>The burden of excessive responsibility</i>	Open-ended

Eva attributes her recovery from burnout to finally understanding that it is on her responsibility to make the recovery happen and change her attitude towards work. Her narrative illustrates the importance of personal agency to recovery, which is further highlighted through the disadvantageous impacts non-agency has on her. Overall the plot line in Eva's narrative is progressive and her narrative can be classified as typical a romance according to Gergen's and Gergen's typology (1988). Eva has encountered unfortunate events in her private life during her recovery such as concerns of her own and husband's health as well as restrictions of the poor economic situation, but which she has heroically overcome.

Maria on the other hand does not feel recovered from burnout. She considers as the reasons for her lack of recovery the heavy workload, the constant change and the constant complaining around her and therefore non-agency is constantly present in her narrative. While it seemed that she had benefited from the rehabilitation in the beginning, the tone of her narrative is quite stable throughout the narrative. This whole two-year time period has been stable in terms of wellbeing, and while more regressive and progressive phase occur, it overall resembles a stable form of narrative (Gergen & Gergen, 1988). Maria's hope lies in the future retirement and therefore the future outcome for her narrative is unknown. Therefore, Maria's narrative can be classified as an open-ended narrative.

Laura attributes as reasons for her recovery the support she received from many different sources coupled with the successful workplace change. The help she received especially from rehabilitation and health care furthermore aided finding her own personal agency. Laura's narrative bears strong resemblance to a typical romance Gergen and Gergen (1988) described, where Laura encounters and finally overcomes a great difficulty in her process of recovery.

Katherine is the one with most changes along her narrative. Participating in rehabilitation gave her a boost in starting to exercise personal agency and making changes in her life. However, she faces a lot of obstacles at work therefore she does not feel fully recovered. Nevertheless the tone of her narrative is at times progressive, as she is feeling better than in the beginning of the narrative and the narrative is going towards her goal state. On the other hand, one of her valued end point is not committing to a certain workplace and keeping changing, which says she is going towards. Therefore Katherine's narrative has many features of a potential romance (Gergen & Gergen, 1988), yet it can also be classified as an open-ended narrative.

3.4. Change of workplace

The processes of workplace change are very different for Laura and Katherine, although they also involve similar features. Both Laura and Katherine received encouragement that nudged them towards the workplace change. Katherine said she got the boost from rehabilitation and realizing how burnt out she was, while Laura was encouraged by her counsellor. Laura also received help from her boss, who offered the possibility to transfer to another town. In both cases, the workplace change was aided or encouraged by others to some extent, but the initiative was ultimately theirs.

The reasons and outcomes of the workplace change differ for Laura and Katherine. Laura got the urge to change workplace after a conflict, which led to a very unpleasant atmosphere at work. Even though this conflict was not the reason for Laura's burnout, it worsened her wellbeing dramatically while she was trying to recover from it. Therefore changing to a new workplace with a good atmosphere had a successful outcome. However, it is notable that Laura implemented a lot of changes in her life such as changing attitude towards work, increasing self-observing and taking care of her well-being otherwise too, both before and but even more after the workplace change. The new workplace, where there was a supportive atmosphere, enabled a ground for implementing the changes she was planning to make and Laura recovers from burnout. Laura is very satisfied with her workplace change and sees herself staying in the workplace for the next five to ten years. As stated previously, Laura also experiences the workplace change as one reason for her recovery.

Katherine on the other hand is still a bit restless and has not found a place she is content with. Her reason for the first workplace change was dissatisfaction with the large responsibility she had and the constant change at the workplace. The first workplace change was a very significant change in her life, as she left her long-term workplace and also long-term hometown and moved far away. The workplace change however was not satisfying, as constant change was present in her new workplace too, which why she changed again.

“At that point when I knew that the manager of the unit will change again I just thought, well, I’m going to leave then.”

While her current workplace has many positive aspects, she tells that she still is not fully satisfied with the work practices at her current workplace, which is why she was planning to change again in the near future. While it might seem that Katherine has high standards for a workplace where she

can feel recovered and content, it does not seem to be the whole truth. Katherine acknowledges recovery is largely up to her and that not every workplace is perfect.

“For me it’s a reality that every place has its issues. There is not any place where everything would go like a dream.”

Changing workplace has also become interesting and rewarding, as the workplaces vary a lot between them.

“I would like to watch like okay, here they do things like this and here they do like this. I would like to see another way to do and work. I just have this feeling like I want to see all kinds of possibilities knowing that this work is done in many different ways.”

Katherine moreover implies that this changing of jobs has in some way become her new lifestyle.

“I think it is more ‘me’ that there is a bit of question marks. // I even changed from a permanent job to a temporary job // I sort of have this where I don’t want to commit myself to anything, but rather experience and move freely.”

Katherine also expresses some dissatisfaction with her current career, but acknowledges the restrictions of the economic situation.

“On the other hand I would like to do something completely else. I’ve been in this career for so long, so I have this dream that I could do something else. But I still haven’t come up what it is what I want to do when I grow up. // But at this moment when employment is what it is, this industry has jobs.”

This desire to explore also other industries was evident early on even in Laura’s narration.

“And I even went to employment office to see career counsellor to see if I’m in the wrong profession, if there’s some other profession I could change to. But no, all the tests we did, they just showed me that I can’t do anything else than hold a pen. So no, couldn’t think about gardening or nursing, all the results told me not to make any hasty decisions.”

Wanting to explore both within the industry and even outside the industry is strongly present in Katherine's interview. The reasons for this want to explore are nevertheless unclear. Laura's successful workplace change which aided recovery implies that exploring work possibilities could be considered as a phase in recovery and that finding a satisfactory workplace could be a prerequisite for recovery and to be able to start exercising personal agency more clearly. Even Laura raises the good workplace as being necessary for the workplace change to be successful.

“And now this new workplace and that it is a good workplace. That's without a doubt a really good thing. But if I would've changed to a bad place, or even worse place, then I don't know where I would be. If I would be recovered.”

However, workplace change is not a prerequisite for recovery from burnout, as evident from Eva's narrative. Whether workplace change would have offered relief for Maria cannot be said, but she believes her situation would not have changed, as the situation at other workplace is even worse. In addition, Maria recognizes the benefits of staying in the same place and the resources it would demand to learn a new job and adapt to the new workplace.

“At this age you don't want to learn a lot of new stuff. My current place is a familiar and safe work environment so... I tried to change tens of years ago.”

Therefore, it can be said that workplace change is a strong act of agency that requires resources. However, it can also be said that workplace change is not alone a solution for burnout. While it provided relief for Laura, it did not help Katherine and according to Maria, would have not helped her either.

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to examine the experience of recovery or lack of recovery from job burnout concentrating on the role of agency. It was additionally interested in the change of workplace as a component of the recovery process. This study shed light on the role of agency in the recovery process by revealing what different combinations of agency and non-agency could be found in each individual's process of (non-)recovery. The ability to exercise control on themselves and the environment by proxy and personal agency were found to improve wellbeing. A form of personal agency that was especially beneficial was adopting a new attitude to work. Similarly, the inability to influence the situation, coined under the term of non-agency, worsened wellbeing and therefore hindered recovery. The findings of the present study contribute to the understanding of the burnout recovery process.

The main findings showed that the individuals expressed personal, proxy and collective agency as well as non-agency in various ways in their narratives of burnout (non-)recovery, and evaluated different forms of agency as significant in leading to their current state of wellbeing. Four different narratives were constructed on the basis of what was evaluated significant for their current state: *the discovery of personal agency*, *the narrative of supported agency*, *the continuous struggle for support* and *the narrative of non-agency*. In the narrative of *discovery of personal agency*, taking responsibility of recovery and changing attitude to work were evaluated as significant. In the *narrative of supported agency*, the forms of proxy agency, such as rehabilitation, health care professionals and family's support and workplace change were perceived as significant. On the contrary, the inability to exercise proxy agency and rely on colleagues or managers was experienced as harmful and even preventing recovery in the *continuous struggle for support*. Finally, the different forms of personal non-agency (e.g., pressure of the economic situation in society, the workload and shortage of staff and too much change) were experienced as the reasons for lack of recovery in the *narrative of non-agency*. These constructed narratives further highlight the importance of being able to exercise control or influence the situation by either personal or proxy agency.

4.1. The role of personal agency in recovery

A regained sense of control has been observed to occur in the return of occupational functioning (Cochran & Laub, 1994; Regedanz, 2008) and taking control has been even suggested to be the core driving mechanism in burnout recovery (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Salminen et al., 2015). Taking control resembles to Bandura's (2001) notion of personal agency, which this study aimed to further specify by studying what it consists of and how it composes during burnout recovery. This study discovered ten different ways the individuals exercised personal agency and tried to influence themselves or the environment and thus improve their wellbeing. The narrative methodology enabled also examining how the forms of agency combined together in each narrative and what forms of agency the individuals self experienced and evaluated as significant for their recovery. As the most significant forms of agency, the participants evaluated taking responsibility of recovery, changed attitude to work and workplace change.

While previous research has acknowledged taking control as the driving force of recovery present throughout the process (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Salminen et al., 2015), this study found two more specified forms under this larger heading, taking responsibility of own recovery and self-interest. Taking responsibility of recovery encompassed the recognition that the recovery was ultimately up to their responsibility. Differing from previous research, our study recognized that taking responsibility of recovery had a different role in each individual's recovery. In the discovery of personal agency, the individual described how realizing her own responsibility in recovery was the key to her recovery. On the other hand, the other recovered individual did not experience this as the key to her recovery, but rather the support she received. In addition, the one that was not recovered recognized her responsibility in producing recovery and even believed in her capability of producing it, but had not succeeded in fully recovering, which also implies that merely recognizing own responsibility in producing recovery is not enough.

Recognizing own responsibility as being sufficient for producing recovery is often unrealistic, because making favourable changes for recovery involves also others and resources the individuals often do not have available. This explains individual in *the narrative of supported agency* valued more the forms of proxy agency in helping her recovery than her own role in realizing and producing recovery. This individual had taken initiative early on in the narrative and actively tried to improve her state, which is why she felt she had all she could herself in order to aid recovery, and

the barrier for her recovery was ultimately the unavailability of help, rather than the lack of acknowledgement of responsibility.

In addition to taking responsibility of own recovery, the changed attitude to work was a form of agency evaluated significant for recovery. Changed attitude to work is also tightly connected to the reflection of values and goals, which even though not evaluated as significant by any of the participants, was the form of personal agency highest in frequency. Therefore the findings of this study supports questioning values as an essential element in the process of burnout recovery found in many previous studies (Bernier, 1998; Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015). Multiple reasons for changing values being an important part of the recovery process have been offered. Bernier (1998) offered Schlenker's (1987) idea of the changed attitude to work as a coping mechanism protecting the ego. Regedanz (2008) argued burnout is especially susceptible for people for whom work provides a lot of meaning and therefore recovery often requires finding meaning in things other than work. Furthermore, Regedanz (2008) demonstrated that changing values results to work losing importance over other things. Another explanation for changing values in the process of recovery is the culminated state of exhaustion the individuals are in, where the individuals are forced to face the reality that their time and energy are limited, and therefore forced to choose the most important things in life and re-evaluate their relationship to work. This was especially evident *in the narrative of discovery of personal agency*.

This study also observed that although reflecting values was important and resulted often to reprioritization, both recovered individuals still described work being still an important meaning-giving portion of their lives thus challenging previous finding of work losing importance (Regedanz, 2008). Instead the individuals had changed their attitude to work by adopting a realistic attitude to the workload and realizing their own limitations. Therefore a contributor to the changed attitude to work could be the increased self-awareness of their own limitations and needs (Bernier, 1998; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Salminen et al., 2015), and might explain why increased awareness is found as one of the early drivers in the process of recovery (Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010). Interestingly, the changed attitude to work is a form of agency evaluated significant for the other recovered individuals, and the form of agency that distinguishes the recovered individuals from the not-recovered individuals. The changed attitude to work is clearly lacking in the narratives of the not-recovered individuals. Recovered individuals had a healthy and realistic attitude towards the heavy workload and demands of the workplace, which implies that by adopting a right attitude to work, the stress caused by these situational stressors can be tackled. Therefore, changing attitude to work could be the key form of agency leading to recovery.

Agency and empowerment as a result of burnout recovery has been highlighted in previous research (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015), but the presence of non-agency has been largely unaddressed. The reason for why non-agency has not been exposed earlier can be due to these studies having studied only recovered individuals or the beneficial mechanisms of rehabilitation in producing recovery (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015). Regedanz (2008) however described recovery from job burnout being strongly process-natured and requiring time, which might suggest the recovery process involves also regressive phases (Cochran & Laub, 1994). This study showed that even the recovered individuals faced regressive phases that could be explained by situations of non-agency. These situations of non-agency were situations where individuals experienced as not being able to influence the situation or the way they dealt with it, but were overcome often by finding a way to understand it and or by changing their attitude towards the problem.

While it is evident that the individuals cannot influence some external and environmental situations, the individuals can influence themselves and try to change the way they interpret and react to the different stressful situations, as evident in the narratives of the recovered individuals. Furthermore while there seems to be a difference between the recovered and non-recovered individuals in how much belief they have concerning their ability to produce recovery, even individuals with high self-efficacy face situations, where they perceive they cannot affect the situation. In these instances they can affect the way they interpret the situation, acknowledge their limitations or exercise proxy agency. Therefore, non-agency does not alone inhibit recovery, when there is a sufficient amount of self-efficacy and the individual is able to exercise personal agency and interpret these situations of non-agency in a favorable way.

The study did find however support for the idea of a “victimic” or “non-agentic” tone in the narrative (Polkinghorne, 1995a), where the individual has a tendency to perceive life perceived as being out their control. This sense of non-agency is evident in *the narrative of non-agency*, where the own ability to influence the situation are seen as very limited and the reasons for lack of recovery are seen as coming from the outside. As evident from *the narrative of discovery of personal agency*, this non-agency can be overcome by recognizing their responsibility in producing recovery and beginning to make any possible, favorable changes, whether it is small changes or thinking or resorting to proxy agency in order to receive resources, such as affective support, tools, strategies and supporting practices.

4.2. The role of proxy and collective agency in recovery

When direct control over the environment is not possible, individuals relied on proxy agency to achieve the desired outcomes. Rehabilitation was an especially important proxy agent in providing information, concrete tools and strategies for dealing with the burnout, which ultimately gave base for the different forms of personal agency in *the narrative of supported agency*. The importance of rehabilitation as a source of support has also been recognized in earlier studies (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010). On the other hand, earlier studies rehabilitation had a stronger role as a provider of social support, affirmation and respect (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010, Salminen et al., 2015), which might be due the retrospective design of the study. Receiving actual strategies that have long-term outcomes might be easier to remember and attribute to rehabilitation than affective support. However, also sources of affective support were mentioned as forms of collective agency, which indicates also affective support is important.

The inability to exercise proxy agency similarly was the reason for lack of recovery in *the narrative of the continuous struggle for support*. More precisely, the inability to exercise proxy agency at the workplace through colleagues and manager was experienced as preventing recovery. This is in line with the previous finding that organizational support that enabled favorable changes in work practices was an advantageous element for recovery (Bernier, 1998). In addition to proxy agency causing favorable changes in work practices and structures that are favorable for the wellbeing of the individual, merely the possibility to be able to exercise proxy agency in the work place seems to be important. The proxy agents responding and reacting to the individual furthermore enable for the individual to feel autonomous, competent and supported, which are basic human needs (Deci & Ryan, 2002). These needs individual, and some needs are more important than others (Deci & Ryan, 2002), which further explain why different forms of agency seem to rise more important than others. These individual needs have been highlighted in explaining the causation of burnout as a mismatch between situational and individual features (Maslach et al., 2001).

Support was present and valued in all narratives, which indicates its importance. Support offers a way to satisfy the basic human needs (Deci & Ryan, 2002), which offers an explanation for the exercise of proxy agency is an effective driver of recovery. In addition to affective support and feelings of belonging, proxy agents are important providers of resources as well as enablers of favorable changes, and without the possibility to either of this, the individuals might easily perceive the situation as out of their control and thus adopt easier non-agentic form.

4.3. Change of workplace

Change of workplace in the present study functioned as a way to improve situational circumstances (Maslach, 1982; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998), which however did not necessarily lead to recovery. This is also evident in the initial sample of the nine participants, who answered the follow-up survey: four had changed workplace, while five stayed in the same workplace. There is not however a significant difference between the stayers and job changers in whether they recovered from burnout. Out of the five stayers, three had recovered from burnout, which is the same number of recovered individuals among the four job changers. This shows that workplace change is not a guarantee of recovery and that recovery is possible also without workplace change. This finding challenges previous research, which implies that workplace change is an essential in order to recovery from burnout (Bernier, 1998; Regedanz, 2008). Based on previous research, it was also expected that the workplace change would be an especially significant driver of recovery, which however did not receive support either. In addition to workplace change not being a guarantee of recovery, the workplace change seemed to be a driver of recovery only among others. In the narrative of successful workplace change recovery, workplace change was a complementary form of agency to the other personal forms of agency, and recovery would have not been possible without the other forms of agencies. Therefore, the current study suggests that the workplace change if successful aids recovery but is not sufficient alone.

A question of what makes a workplace changes successful rises. Evidently, the quality of the workplace is an important factor in the success of workplace change. It is clear that there needs to be satisfactory situational elements, where the individual can be able to exercise forms of proxy agency and receive help and support from proxy agents. At the current economic climate, the resources of the workplaces seemed to be insufficient, which contributed both to the not successful workplace change and to whether the participants decided to change jobs. Three of the four participants mentioned frequently the bad economic situation, which affected both the availability of jobs but also to the fact that there are not many workplaces where the situation is much better. The economic climate played also a role in why the other participants did not resort to changing workplace, but another likely factor is the proximity to their retirement. Taking into consideration the insecurity of the workplace success and the difficulty of finding a job, it is understandable why the two individuals close to retirement chose to stay in the current workplace and find a way to adapt there.

However, a feature that seems to be important to the success of the workplace change is having flexibility and realistic expectations towards the change of workplace. Cherniss (1992) revealed that individuals, who had suffered from burnout at an early stage in their career, were more flexible willing to give themselves time to adapt and learn to like the new workplace. There was clear difference also between the narratives of successful and unsuccessful workplace change in the amount of effort the individuals put into changing the workplace, which can be indicative of having different expectations in how much the workplace change might help influence their wellbeing. In the narrative of the successful workplace change, the workplace change was result of a combination of careful effort and favorable conditions, while the narrative of the less successful workplace change, the change of workplace required a large effort and heavy investments. Loss of these invested resources and not meeting the high expectations is a considerable source of distress (Hobfoll, 1989) and therefore might explain partially why the workplace change was not favorable for wellbeing even though it was better than the old one.

The present study has therefore questioned the significance of workplace change as a phase of burnout recovery process. Its commonness is indisputable, which could be attributed to the attraction of a new and fresh environment that enables breaking out from the old environment and the associated forms of non-agency. What further confirms the importance of new environmental conditions is the observation of the participant, who recovered without change of workplace, was in a manager position, where she was able to influence workplace practices and change situational features such as work distribution. However, this study has further highlighted that the workplace change alone is not sufficient, but the other forms of agencies, prominently the realistic attitude to work, must be adopted in order for the workplace change itself to succeed.

4.4. Methodological considerations and recommendations for future research

The narrative approach as the methodological framework made it possible to follow individual's experiences of their pathways in recovery and non-recovery highlighting each participants' individual (non-)recovery process and what forms of agency were significant to their process (Squire, 2008). A strength of the present study is the uniqueness of study design, as it studies individuals two years after undergoing the same intervention. Therefore the design eliminates the effect of participants receiving treatments of different effectiveness, yet allows individual features to have enough time to affect the each participant's process. Adopting a case study approach the

sample of the study is small and therefore provides insight into the experience of (non-)recovery, but not a possibility to generalize the process to a population (Yin, 2003). The sampling of both recovered and non-recovered individuals furthermore sheds light on why only some individuals that have undergone the same intervention recover, which also highlights some significant differences in the process. The results show that the rehabilitation is only a small part of the recovery, and recovery depends on many other aspects. Furthermore, similar drivers of recovery were found also in this study, but this study emphasized differences in what driver of recovery was described to be significant.

However limitations exist in the chosen sample, which prevent making too bold generalizations to theory. All of the participants were women, which poses a question of gender and whether the findings would be different for a sample of men. Previous research implies however that there are not clear gender differences in burnout (see Purvanova & Muros, 2010). In addition, women are overrepresented as participants of vocational rehabilitation (Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2013), which explains the gender distribution in the present study sample. Furthermore, two of the participants were close to retirement, which assumingly affects the thoughts and behavior of the participants, as they are aware that future retirement will solve many occupational problems. Three of the participants were also on sick leave during the time of the interviews, which might affect the way they narrate about their workplace or their life. As they have more time to themselves to recover and are not dealing with workplace stress, they might evaluate workplace and their wellbeing as more positive. One of the women did evaluate her wellbeing better now that she had been away from work, but acknowledged that her wellbeing is worse at work. On the other hand, being on a sick leave might provide them distance to their situation and enable deeper reflection.

The interviews were conducted at a peaceful location in a semi-structured manner, which enabled the respondents to elaborate and bring forward topics important to their experiences (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2012). A limitation concerning the interview situation could be the role of the interviewer. The young age of the interviewer and the age difference to the participants might inhibit full disclosure. Furthermore the interviewer was from a research project that also represents the rehabilitation center in the minds of the participants, which might lead to the participants editing answers because of social desirability or the wanting to please the researcher. The rehabilitation may have been evaluated more beneficial than it was or more responsible for the positive changes. A protective factor for this bias is that the sample consists of participants that were measured to benefit from the rehabilitation by the BBI-15 (Bergen Burnout Indicator 15; Näätänen et al., 2003) during the half-year follow up period, so the participants were likely to truly benefited from the rehabilitation.

Furthermore the interviews were conducted, transcribed and analyzed by the same researcher, which eliminates variation between them, but as a limitation permits more personal bias than with triangulation of several researchers (Seale, 1999). Qualitative research however acknowledges the existence of subjective interpretations and does not aim fully to objectivity, but rather reliability and transparency in the research process (Seale, 1999). The analysis process and the interpretations from the interviews are accompanied by citations in order to increase transparency and for the reader to follow the interpretation made by the researcher. Furthermore abductive content analysis, which relies both on theory and data, gives less room for the subjective interpretation of the researcher instead of a fully data-driven analysis method (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2012; Dubois & Gadde, 2002). On the other hand, the reliance on theory might leave some drivers of recovery that cannot be analyzed by human agency theory into account. Therefore in future research the utilization of a more data-driven analysis method might shed some light on other drivers of recovery that are not directly connected to agency.

Using two analysis methods enabled a deeper examination of the phenomenon of agency (Frost, 2009) as it permitted examining agency from a content-focused perspective but also what its role in the individual pathways. Content analysis revealed the different forms of agencies, while narrative analysis revealed valuable information in how the different forms of agencies combine together and contribute to an individual recovery. Utilization of two analysis methods however also poses some methodological questions. One is whether the two methodological frameworks truly complemented each other, as content analysis argues counting frequencies of phrases as implying importance (Abrahamson & Hambrick, 1997; Duriau et al., 2007), when social constructivism implies that the importance is related to the interview situation rather than to the experience of recovery (Bruner, 1991; Hänninen, 1999). Counting frequencies of phrases however gave transparency to the analysis and therefore increased reliability.

Overall, this study provides an extensive picture of how agency can drive the recovery process forward. The application of the theory of human agency (Bandura, 2001) was very appropriate for the study as it explained many of the drivers of recovery. Yet as this small sample already contained a variety in how agency functioned in the narratives of recovery and non-recovery, there possibly are still combinations of the forms of agency that could be uncovered. Therefore a qualitative study with a larger sample could reveal whether there are other significant forms of agencies or combinations of agencies that aid recovery. Furthermore, the larger sample could consist of individuals that have not undergone a specific intervention if intervention at all to see what is the role of intervention in recovery. In addition, information about the role and development of personal agency could be applied even to recovery of other mental or physical illnesses that include the loss

of personal agency. Polkinghorne (1995a) demonstrated how the recovery of occupational functioning after a physical injury involves a restoration of agency, which suggests the drivers of recovery found in this study might also apply in gaining agency and thus recovering from other illnesses.

4.5. Conclusions and implications

The present study revealed a variety of the forms of agency used and how these forms combined in different individual processes of burnout recovery. In addition this study also confirms recovery to be a time-taking and non-linear process that includes both progressive and regressive phases (Cochran & Laub, 1994; Regedanz, 2008), the progressive phases consisting of the empowered phase the individual is able exercise control over the situation through both personal and proxy agency and the regressive phases consisting on non-agency. Therefore, this study illustrates that agency is a means in enabling recovery, but ultimately requires a variety of forms of agency and relatively little non-agency.

This study contributes to the existing literature by shedding light on the individual processes of (non-)recovery and by showing the role of the different forms of agency in the processes. Particularly, this study uncovered new more specified forms of personal agency and demonstrates how they functioned in differing ways in the different processes of recovery. Furthermore, this study showed the prevalence of non-agency that previous studies of burnout recovery have ignored (Eriksson et al., 2010; Fjellman-Wiklund et al., 2010; Nikkanen, 2006; Regedanz, 2008; Salminen et al., 2015). Non-agency is harmful for wellbeing, yet it still occurs also in successful narratives of recovery and can be overcome by forms of agency. This study also shed light on the function of workplace change in the process of recovery. Challenging previous research (Bernier, 1998), workplace change did not rise as a significant phase of recovery and remained secondary to the forms of personal and proxy agency in the process job burnout recovery.

At a practical level, the findings show the gaining a sense of control of one's life and personal agency are important in for burnout recovery. This is consistent with the current goals of vocational rehabilitation that aim to increase personal agency. However, more emphasis should be laid on ensuring their individuals receive support during the recovery process. Specifically the possibility to exercise forms of agency at the workplace was experienced especially important, which is why collaboration between workplace and rehabilitation should be further enforced. The effectiveness of

the inclusion of workplace in rehabilitation has been demonstrated also earlier in literature (Blonk, Brenninkmeijer, Lagerveld, & Houtman, 2006; Häätinen et al., 2007), which further highlight the importance of the inclusion of the workplace. The current economic pressure has however led to the discontinuance of organizing vocational rehabilitations funded by the Finnish government (Prime Minister's Office, 2015). Instead, more funds are directed towards rehabilitation psychotherapy (Prime Minister's Office, 2015), which is clearly an intervention of individual level, implying that the treatment of burnout at an individual-organization interface including the workplace is in danger to be disregarded. This should therefore encourage organizations and workplaces to be responsive and flexible for its recovering employees' needs and offer more chances for flexibility and mobility in order to ensure their long-term recovery.

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APPENDICES

Appendice 1. Interview scheme

Beginning of the interview

Before we start the actual interview, I would like to shortly tell you about this study and the interview. This interview will be used for my Master's thesis that studies recovery from job burnout focusing on the time period after rehabilitation.

First of all, I would like your written agreement on participating this interview. (shortly explain the main points on the informed consent and let the participant read and sign the informed consent)

I also hope it is alright for you that I record the interview, so that I don't have write everything down? (put the tape recorder on)

I would still like to tell you that I am not studying the rehabilitation or interested in its effectiveness, but about your experiences during these two years after rehabilitation, so feel free to talk honestly about your experiences as there aren't any right or wrong answers.

Do you have any questions before we start the actual interview?

Interview Questions.

1. What was your experience of the **rehabilitation**?
 - Did the rehabilitation benefit you?
 - Were you away from work at the time of rehabilitation? How soon did you return to work?
 - Have you been on a sick leave due to burnout after the rehabilitation?
 - How did it feel going back to work from rehabilitation? How were you perceived?
2. Have you **changed workplace** during these two years? / Have you thought about changing workplace?
 - When did the change happen?
 - Why did you change workplace?
 - How did it happen in practice?
 - How is your new job? How have you adapted to the new job and the new work community?
 - How do you feel about the job change when you reflect on it now?
3. If you compare to the time after rehabilitation, **what is your well-being right now**?
 - How is your physical well-being? Do you still have symptoms?
 - What is your most prevalent mood?
 - What are feeling when you go to work every morning? / How do you feel when you come home from work? Why?
 - What are the reasons for this well-being / mood / energy level?
4. **What kind of changes have happened** during these two years after rehabilitation?
 - In your own thoughts and behavior?
 - At work or in the environment? In the work community?
 - In your own attitude towards work?
5. **How has work** been during these two years?
 - What is your normal day at work like?
 - What kind of work community and atmosphere do you have there?
 - What is your manager like?

Questions about day-to-day situations.

(Positive)

- Are there things at work that make you feel happy and glad?
- Can you think of any specific situations that have made you feel happy? What kind of situations have these been?

(Negative)

- Has there been situations at work that have left you feeling a bit unpleasant or anxious?
- Can you think of any exhausting things at work?
- Has there been any kind of conflicts at work? Have they affected your recovery?
- What has your role been in these situations? Have you had an impact on these situations? How about other peoples' roles?

Questions addressing agency.

- Has there been situations at work, where you have felt that things have gone unfairly? Have you intervened in these situations?
- Has there been situations when you have felt that things have gone unfairly, but where you have felt like it is out of your control?
- Has there been other kinds of situations, where you have felt some sort of frustration or hopelessness?

6. Free-time. Has there been changes in the way you spend your freetime?

- New hobbies?
- What do you do when you come home from work? What else do you do during your freetime?
- What kind of things give you joy and energy during your freetime?
- Are there things in your freetime that are exhausting?

7. How do you take care of your well-being?

- What kind of things do you do to recover and re-energize from the day at work?

8. Can you name a few things that you feel have been **main reasons for recovery / lack of recovery?**

9. Values. What kind of things are important to you right now?

- What is the importance of work?
- Have there been changes in values in the last years?

10. Future.

- What does the future look like?
- What kind of thoughts do you have about continuing in your current workplace?
- Are there things that you will absolutely continue doing in the future?
- Do you have some aspirations or goals for the future? Related to work or wellbeing/health?

11. Would you still have something on your mind related to the themes of the interview?

12. Thank you for the interview...