

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The study aimed to explore the lived perceptions and experiences of clients with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) on early and delayed return to work (RTW); and factors perceived to affect this. The results obtained were related to an existing and identified RTW conceptual framework which was modified for clients with MDD.

Methodology: The study was conducted at a private hospital in Soweto, South Africa. A qualitative descriptive methodology was used in the study. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants for the study. Self-report questionnaires and in-depth face-to-face interviews were used to collect data and qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the data from eight participants.

Results: Two themes emerged namely 'Waiting to RTW' and the 'Perceptions and Experience of RTW'. There were factors such as social pressures and fears about RTW that had an impact on early RTW. The results were used to modify an existing RTW conceptual framework to guide intervention for clients with MDD.

Conclusion: Clients with MDD have the ability to RTW after a period of hospitalization. There are many factors that affect early RTW and occupational therapist can play a role in improving their RTW intervention programmes to address these factors.

Key words: Return to work, Major Depressive Disorder, Perceptions and Experiences.