



Downsizing survival: The experience of work and organizational commitment

H.K. Knudsen, J.A. Johnson, J.K. Martin & P.M. Roman

Sociological Inquiry, 2003; 73:265-283.

Although downsizing has become a common feature of American workplaces, the existing literature has focused on the effects of how downsizing is conducted, rather than considering how downsizing affects the experience of work for downsizing survivors. Using data from the 1997 National Employee Survey and structural modeling techniques, this study compares downsizing survivors and workers unaffected by downsizing on a variety of sociodemographic indicators, job characteristics, and organizational environment measures in order to explain the lower levels of organizational commitment among survivors. The model in which downsizing survival was directly and indirectly associated with commitment was generally supported. Survivors reported less commitment than unaffected workers. In addition, downsizing survival was positively associated with job-related stress and negatively associated with perceived organizational support, which translated into survivors' lower levels of commitment. This research suggests that organizations that downsize should consider ways to redesign work processes so as to reduce job-related stress and should engage in organizational practices that demonstrate organizational support for surviving employees.