

Individual Adjustment to Shelter-In-Place because of COVID-19

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Abstract

Crises such as natural disasters, terrorists' attacks, and pandemics can disrupt individuals' workdays. To gain an understanding of whether and how individuals adjust, we conducted a qualitative study involving 52 individuals who were compelled to 'shelter-in-place' because of COVID-19. Based on the findings from this study, we offer a process model with the following components: (a) individuals rapidly yet imperfectly adjust to their workdays by re-organizing their practices to meet unclear expectations while harboring negative emotions, (b) they make such imperfect adjustments out of necessity and because they perceive the crisis to be temporary, and (c) individuals who can visualize a combination of facets of their 'earlier normal' workdays with their 'temporary normal' workdays desire a transition to 'new-normal' workdays post-crisis; others who do not engage in such prospection want to return to their 'old normal' workdays. Each sub-element of our model extends the conversation on adjustment by identifying directions for future research, in particular around (a) temporary imperfect adjustment, and (b) the creation of future possibilities through a combination of meaningful actions in the present with experiences from the past to prospect about the future.

Keywords: COVID-19, disruption, adjustment, prospection, qualitative

** Reverse alphabetic ordering. Each author contributed equally.