

Introduction

Today, many organizations and employers are experiencing the effects of stress on work performance. The affects of stress can be either positive or negatives. What is perceived as positive stress by one person may be perceived as negative stress by another, since everyone perceives situations differently. According to Barden (2001), negative stress is becoming a major illness in the work environment, and it can debilitate employees and be costly to employers. Managers need to identify those suffering from negative stress and implement programs as a defense against stress. These programs may reduce the impact stress has on employees' work performance.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the negative effects of stress on employees and the methods employers use to manage employees' stress.

Significance of the Study

There are three primary groups that may benefit from this study. The first group, consisting of employees in todays business organizations, may learn to identify ways that stress negatively affects there work performance. Identifying the negative effects many enable them to take necessary action to cope with stress. By sharing this knowledge, employees can act as a vehicle to help management implement appropriate stress reduction programs. The second group that may benefit from this study is employers who may gain insight as to how stress is actually negatively effecting employees work performance. Finally educators can use these findings as a valuable guide to incorporate into they're curriculum. By emphasizing to students the importance of developing programs to deal with stress, the students may be able to transfer this knowledge to the workplace, thereby improving the quality of the work environment.

Scope of the Study

This study has limited to the perceptions of full-time business employees as to the negative affects that stress has on work performance and the steps that employers are taking to manage stress. For the purpose of this study, what constitutes full-time employment is defined by the employer. This study was restricted to businesses operating in the Central Texas area. The central Texas area encompasses all communities within Hays, Kendall, Travis, and Williamson counties. For the purpose of this study, stress is defined as disruptive or disquieting influences that negatively affect on individual in the workplace. Data for this study were collected during the fall of 2002.

Source of Data

Data for this study were collected using a questionnaire developed by a group of students at Southwest Texas State University. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part one consisted of a list of 15 work performance areas that may be negatively affected by a person's level of stress. Respondents were asked to indicate whether stress increased, decreased, or had not changed they're work performance

in each area. They were also asked to indicate from the list of 15 work performance areas the area that was most negatively affected by stress and the area that was the least negatively affected by stress. In the second part of the questionnaire, a list of 17 programs was provided and the respondents were asked to indicate which programs their companies had implemented to manage stress. Part three was designed to collect demographic data for a respondent profile, including full-time employee classification and age group.

Sample Selection

The respondents involved in this survey were employees working in companies located in Central Tennessee. A nonprobability, convenience sampling technique was used to collect primary data. Each member of the research team was responsible for distributing three questionnaires to members of the sample. Respondents were given self-addressed, stamped envelopes in which to return their completed questionnaires to Southwest Texas state University, to ensure confidentiality. Controls were used to eliminate duplication of the responses.

Limitation of the Study

This study may be limited through the use of a questionnaire as a data collection instrument. Because questionnaires must generally be brief, areas that may have been effected by stress may not have been included in the questionnaire.

Also all programs that may be available to employees for managing stress may not have been included in the study. The study may also be limited by the use of nonprobability, convenience sampling method. The sample of business employees for the study was chosen for convenience and may not be representative of the total population of business employees. Care should be taken when generalizing these findings to the entire population. Finally, the use of simple statistical techniques may introduce an element of subjectivity into the interpretation and analysis of the data. All attempts have been made to minimize the effects of these limitations.