

employees' work performance. Finally, educators can use these findings as a valuable guide to incorporate into their 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 was limited to the perceptions of full-time business employees as to the negative effects 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 an individual in the workplace. Data for this study were collected during the fall of 2002.

Review of Related Literature

Barden (2001), a freelance writer specializing in health care and a former managing editor of *Commerce and Health*, stated the importance of wellness programs and gave specific examples of corporations that are successfully implementing such programs. The Morrison Company currently saves \$8.33 for every dollar spent on wellness by offering programs such as weight loss, exercise, and back care. Axon Petroleum estimates that wellness programs will save \$1.6 million each year in health care costs for its 650 employees. In addition to Morrison and Axon Petroleum, Barden

cited the savings for six other companies. According to the Wellness Bureau of America, the success of these companies offers concrete proof that wellness programs pay off by lowering health care costs, reducing absenteeism, and_ increasing productivity.

Foster (2002), a professional speaker on stress-management, surveyed mid-level managers and found stress to be a major determinant in worker productivity. According to the study, the primary areas affected by stress are employee morale, absenteeism, and decision making abilities. By recognizing that a problem exists and by addressing the issue, managers can reduce stressful activities and increase worker performance in the business organization,

Harrold and Wayland (2002) reported that increasing stress affects morale, productivity, organizational efficiency, absenteeism, and profitability for both individuals and the organization. The problem for businesses today is knowing how