

Coping with downsizing: A comparison of executive-level and middle managers

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Abstract

A longitudinal study compared the reactions of executive-level and middle managers prior to a large-scale downsizing, during initial and final phases, and following the downsizing. Compared with executives, middle managers perceived greater job insecurity, were more likely to use escape coping, and reported lower job performance and higher levels of health symptoms. Over time, both executives and middle managers reported a decline in perceived threat of job loss but an increase in sense of powerlessness, a decrease in the use of control-oriented coping strategies, and reduced job performance in the initial phase of downsizing. Although less so, executive-level managers were also adversely affected by the downsizing, suggesting that this group should be included in stress management interventions.