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## **An Exploratory Study of How Millennials Approach and Communicate Mental Health in the Workplace**

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**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF HOW MILLENNIALS APPROACH AND COMMUNICATE  
MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the  
Weissman School of Arts and Science  
Baruch College, The City University of New York

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

**In**

**CORPORATE COMMUNICATION**

**By**

Johanna Seitenbach

December 11, 2019

Under the guidance and approval of the committee,  
and approved by all its members, this thesis has been  
accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Master of Arts in Corporate Communication.

A Colloquium for the above-named Graduate Student will be held at  
Baruch College-William and Anita Newman Vertical Campus, Room 8-210

On

December 11, 2019, from 5:30pm

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Date

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# Table of Contents

<b>I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>II. ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>III. PURPOSE .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1. <i>Justification .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>IV. LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>8</b>
1. <i>Why Mental Health? .....</i>	<i>9</i>
2. <i>Business Value.....</i>	<i>10</i>
3. <i>Negative Mental Health Factors .....</i>	<i>12</i>
4. <i>Positive Mental Health Factors .....</i>	<i>14</i>
5. <i>Stigma .....</i>	<i>15</i>
6. <i>Mental Health and Communications.....</i>	<i>16</i>
7. <i>Millennials and Mental Health .....</i>	<i>19</i>
8. <i>Changing Working Conditions .....</i>	<i>20</i>
9. <i>Literature Review Conclusion.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<b>V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>VI. HYPOTHESIS.....</b>	<b>22</b>
1. <i>How do millennials feel about today’s current corporate mental health environment?.....</i>	<i>22</i>
2. <i>How does the workplace impact millennials’ mental health and well-being?.....</i>	<i>22</i>
3. <i>What does an ideal mentally healthy workplace look/feel like for millennials?.....</i>	<i>23</i>
4. <i>Does investing in mental health resources benefit the company at large? .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<b>VII. METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>23</b>
1. <i>Research Design .....</i>	<i>24</i>
2. <i>Distribution .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<b>VIII. RESULTS .....</b>	<b>25</b>
1. <i>Accuracy.....</i>	<i>25</i>
2. <i>Participation .....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Figure 1: Age Range of Survey Respondents.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Figure 2. Gender Breakdown of Respondents .....</i>	<i>27</i>
3. <i>Fundamental Analysis .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<b>A. Importance .....</b>	<b>27</b>

<i>Figure 3. Graph displaying “How important do you think it is for a company to be cognizant of its employees’ mental health?” results</i> .....	28
<i>Figure 4. Graph displaying "On a scale of 1-5, how important do you think it is for a company to have some sort of resources/support to address mental health?" results</i> .....	28
<b>B. Current State</b> .....	29
<i>Figure 5. Top 5 results from survey question “What does your company do to address mental health in the workplace?”</i> .....	29
<b>C. Stigma</b> .....	30
<i>Figure 6. Results from survey question “On a scale of 1-5, how much stigma is there around the topic of mental health at your workplace?”</i> .....	30
<b>IX. FINDINGS (Organized by Research Questions)</b> .....	<b>30</b>
1. <i>How do millennials feel about today’s current corporate mental health environment?</i> .....	30
<i>Figure 7. Table outlining the percentage of respondents that are satisfied with the way their company approaches mental health overlapped with the resources/initiatives the company currently offers</i> .....	31
<i>Figure 8. Table outlining the percentage of respondents who are satisfied with the way their company approaches mental health overlapped with how these companies communicate mental health initiatives and resources</i> .....	32
2. <i>How does the workplace impact millennials’ mental health and well-being?</i> .....	32
3. <i>What does an ideal mentally healthy workplace look/feel like for millennials?</i> .....	32
<i>Figure 9. Visual outlining the percentage of respondents who picked the top three most effective ways for their company to communicate mental health-related resources</i> .....	33
<i>Figure 10. Bar graph comparing current mental health initiatives in the workplace versus the top three mental health initiatives millennials would like to see their company continue or start to do.</i> .....	34
4. <i>Does investing in mental health resources benefit the company at large?</i> .....	35
<b>X. DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>XI. RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>37</b>
1. <i>Communications needs to be at the forefront of every corporate mental health strategy.</i> .....	37
<i>Figure 11. Bar graph comparing millennials’ current mental health communication tactics in the workplace versus the top three mental health communication tactics millennials find most effective</i> .....	38
2. <i>One size does NOT fit all corporate mental health programs.</i> .....	38
3. <i>A corporate mental health strategy must feed into the organization’s overall business strategy.</i> .....	40
<b>XII. LIMITATIONS</b> .....	<b>40</b>
1. <i>Age</i> .....	40
2. <i>Industry</i> .....	41
<i>Figure 12. Pie Chart displaying the different industries survey respondents work for with the “OTHER” open-ended text responses included</i> .....	42
3. <i>Job Level</i> .....	42
4. <i>Sampling</i> .....	42

<b>XIII. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS .....</b>	<b>43</b>
1. <i>Diversity</i> .....	43
2. <i>Qualitative Research</i> .....	43
3. <i>Generation Z</i> .....	44
<b>XIV. CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>XV. ADDENDUM .....</b>	<b>45</b>
1. <i>Survey</i> .....	45
2. <i>Bibliography</i> .....	50

## I. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A great deal of time, effort, and collaboration goes into a final thesis. The help I received during my time at Baruch College cannot be overlooked. First, I would like to wholeheartedly thank all of my professors and the countless speakers they brought in to enrich class discussion. Storytelling is the backbone of communications, and it is through their experiences and teachings that I have blossomed academically and professionally.

Secondly, I would like to thank my roommates, Kendra Costantino and Kara Torrisi, for bearing with me as I juggled a full-time job and graduate school. The pep talks and years of support gave me the confidence and drive to make it to the finish line.

The third group I would like to thank is my advisor, Instructor Stephen K. Dishart, and my reader, Dr. Caryn Medved. From sending me key research studies to answering countless emails, they have guided and inspired me through this thesis journey. Researching and discussing mental health is not always easy, but these two were open, honest, and excited I was taking on this heavy topic. Their encouragement is what drove me to pursue what turned into a complicated and sometimes uncomfortable research focus.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not adequately thank my family. I am lucky to have a supportive brother and sister-in-law, Justin and Rachel Seitenbach, who were always willing to listen to my thesis progress and offer support with any roadblocks I faced. I would like to thank my late father, Ronald Seitenbach, who passed away before I began my master's at Baruch but who knew my passion for writing and encouraged me to pursue it. To this day, I have yet to find an accountant with as strong of an editing eye as my father. My last acknowledgement goes out to my mother, Lori Ribler-Seitenbach, who has been an inspiration in every step of my life. From answering all of my after-class calls during my walks home from the subway to showing me at a young age the importance of talking about my own struggles with mental health, this thesis would not be here without you and I would not be here without you.



## **II. ABSTRACT**

Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, affecting more than 300 million people. As more millennials take on leadership positions, it is important to understand how companies are currently addressing mental health in the workplace and compare this to how millennials approach the subject. The quantitative analysis completed through this study helped to determine what a mentally healthy workplace looks and feels like for millennials. Companies are increasingly investing in mental health initiatives for several reasons: to increase brand recognition, to improve company culture, to mitigate potential lawsuits, and to increase employee engagement and retention. This survey assessed how influential company mental health initiatives are in their ability and potential to attract, engage, and inspire the millennial workforce.

The three key findings obtained from the research are: 1. Communications needs to be at the forefront of every corporate mental health strategy, 2. One size does NOT fit all corporate mental health programs, and 3. A corporate mental health strategy must feed into the organization's overall business strategy. In the end, a company's mental health strategy is only effective if it is being utilized and if it produces an open, stigma-free culture.

## **III. PURPOSE**

The three main purposes of this research were as follows:

- a. To explore the relationship that exists between millennials' mental health and the workplace
- b. To uncover drawbacks and/or successful patterns in workplace mental health culture
- c. To identify the optimal communication tactics to promote mental health in the workplace

## 1. Justification

According to the World Health Organization, nearly half of the world's population is affected by mental illness at some point in their life. Not having proper support from the workplace can impact an employee's self-esteem, professional growth, and productivity. The aim of this thesis is to reveal how millennials currently feel about mental health in the workplace, while also determining the ideal future state of corporate mental health from the millennial viewpoint. As more companies are investing in addressing mental health in the workplace, it is essential to measure the impact of specific approaches and evaluate different methods for communicating and launching mental health initiatives geared towards millennials. A corporate mental health strategy can fall short if it is not properly communicated and understood companywide. Additionally, underlying mental health stigma creates a barrier in the workplace that prevents employees from seeking help. Billions of dollars a year is lost due to mental health issues that go untreated. It has become clear that this is a tangible loss affecting companies' bottom lines; which is why it is essential to focus on the research and case studies now to develop top-tier mental well-being programs aimed at the largest working population: millennials.

## **IV. LITERATURE REVIEW**

To encompass the full scope of mental health in the workplace, this literature review is organized by the following sections:

- 1) Why mental health matters in the workplace
- 2) The business value of investing in mental health resources and initiatives
- 3) Factors in the workplace that negatively affect an employee's mental health
- 4) Factors in the workplace that positively affect an employee's mental health
- 5) Stigma surrounding mental health in the workplace
- 6) The overlap between mental health and communications
- 7) The research on millennials and mental health

- 8) Changing working conditions
- 9) Literature review conclusion

### 1. Why Mental Health?

“In a world where innovation and doing things differently genuinely matters, mental health is not just nice, it’s necessary” (Forbes Coaches Council, 2017). Companies often focus on the physical well-being of their employees while simultaneously overlooking the importance of mental health and its benefits. Leading companies take a holistic approach by investing as much in employees’ mental health as they do in their physical health. More workers don’t show up to work because of stress and anxiety than because of physical illness or injury (World Health Organization, 2004). The literature has shown that more than 80% of individuals with depression can be treated quickly and effectively, especially when the symptoms are recognized early (Finkelstein, 1996). Subsequently, the conversation is now steering away from having mental health resources as an add-on and more towards having them as a necessity.

Companies that do invest in proper mental health initiatives and prevention programs find that these initiatives improve productivity and reduce absenteeism, both saving the company time and money (Matrix Insight, 2012). If measured and evaluated in a timely manner, mental health initiatives prove to have a great deal of short-term and long-term monetary gains. If untreated, many employees are at risk of having the workplace negatively affect their mental health. To address the demands of today’s careers—careers that are defined by greater transitions and more demanding job outcomes—employees’ mental health needs to be factored into a company’s culture and values (Leka & Jain, 2017). In fact, three out of five employees have experienced mental health issues in the past year due to their work and almost a third of the workforce has been formally diagnosed with a mental illness (Business in the Community, 2017). As work continues to expand through the globalization and migration of workers, an increased dependency on technology, and international

economic pressures, it becomes increasingly important to analyze mental health's impact on the workplace (OECD, 2011).

Because of the sensitive nature of mental health, employers must be equipped with the proper training to successfully promote a positive mental health environment. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has found that employers tend to have a poor understanding about mental health, what their role is, and how to best intervene when a mental health issue arises.

“Work affects a person's mental health, while in turn an employee's mental health affects the workplace” (World Health Organization, 2005). Investing in an employee's development goes beyond the day-to-day job description and encompasses the individual's physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

## 2. Business Value

Businesses will not invest in mental health initiatives if these initiatives don't bring some sort of economic value to the company. A great deal of research has been done to help quantify the return on investing in employees' mental health. Before addressing the return on investment, it is important to evaluate the time and money lost due to neglected workplace mental health.

There are two main ways companies lose money as a result of untreated mental health: absenteeism and presenteeism. Absenteeism is when an employee doesn't show up to work because of a mental health-related issue. According to the World Health Organization, 35-45% of absenteeism from work is due to mental health setbacks. Presenteeism is when an employee goes to work but their productivity is hindered by their mental health.

It is estimated that around one hour a week is lost as a result of depression-related absenteeism, while up to four hours a week are lost to depression-related presenteeism. Thus, presenteeism poses an even greater threat to disrupting the workplace than absenteeism. (OECD, 2012). Stigma may play a factor in these results as well, as more employees feel pressure to go to work during a poor mental health day. Studies show that 95% of people who report experiencing a mental health problem claim their mental health has affected their work performance. The most common symptom of presenteeism is finding it difficult to concentrate (85%), second is taking longer to complete tasks (64%), and third is difficulty in decision-making (54%) (CIPD, 2016a). Additional risks associated with lack of workplace mental health resources may be related to reduced morale, high turnover, early retirement, and litigation (World Health Organization, 2005). Without a healthy work environment, businesses risk costly litigation, fines, and even imprisonment of directors and managers who are found guilty of violations (Burton, 2010). Not having an established mental health program can really take a toll on the internal and external dynamics of an organization.

In addition to having a corporate mental health strategy in place, companies must assess and adapt to meet the needs of their employees. There is little research analyzing how the workforce feels about and approaches the current corporate mental health climate. If companies aren't continually evaluating these programs, the business value remains limited or nonexistent. Do companies that invest in mental health initiatives choose the right programs? Are the communication strategies behind these initiatives effective in disseminating information and mitigating stigma?

In the United States, the number of low productivity days due to mental health averages 31 per month per 100 workers (Kessler & Frank, 1997). In a 2016 study, the absence of mental health treatment projected more than 12 billion days of lost productivity (equaling more than 50 million years of work); this equates to an estimated cost of \$925 billion a year lost due to depression and anxiety disorders. This same study found that the cost is quite minimal for depression treatment. The approximate annual cost during 15 years of increased investment in mental health resources would be \$.08 per person in low-income countries, \$.34

in lower middle-income countries, \$1.12 in upper middle-income countries and \$3.89 in high-income countries. The results prove that, in the end, the benefit-to-cost ratio of scaled-up treatment for mental health produces positive gains (Chisholm et al., 2016). In Europe the total costs of work-related depression are estimated to be €620 billion over a one-year period. Again, the major cost drivers are absenteeism and presenteeism at €270 billion (Matrix Insight, 2012).

Mental health is not solely the responsibility of the employer; it also falls on the government, policymakers, and individuals to be accountable for creating a more positive mental health environment. Companies, however, have the ability to invest in mental health initiatives and see a positive return on this investment. The data summarizes the impact on a geographic scale, whereas for companies to justify investments in mental health initiatives an organization's tangible losses and potential gains must be tracked closely. A 2000 study found that in the United States a single employee with depression costs his or her employers approximately \$3,000. The majority of these costs are not related to treatment but, again, are more associated with absenteeism and presenteeism (Harnois & Gabriel, 2000). In a 2011 study, a workplace mental health promotion program showed a return on investment of £9.69 for every £1 spent (Knapp, McDaid, & Parsonage, 2011). In 2015, Unilever reported that for every £1 spent on well-being initiatives the company saw a return of £10. The gains were attributed to an increase in employee engagement, productivity, and fewer absences (Popiela, 2017).

### 3. Negative Mental Health Factors

There are a myriad of reasons why someone may be suffering from a mental health ailment, but two primary factors contribute to poor mental health in the workplace: individual and work. In a survey with individuals who described their mental health as poor, 7% claim it is a result of problems at work, 37% believe it stems from problems outside of work, and the majority (54%) attribute it to a combination of the two (CIPD, 2016a). The gap in research

exists for those who may not describe their mental health as poor: how does work impact the average employee's mental health? Is it more positive, negative, or both? Mental health problems emerge due to a complicated interplay of biological, psychological, social, and emotional elements (Popiela, 2017).

It is extremely challenging to keep one's personal life separate from one's work life. More and more the two sectors of life are becoming intertwined as one. An employee's individual financial, social, and emotional well-being could hinder his or her mental health. One's mental health also comes down to biological factors, "[s]uch as genetic characteristics and disturbance in neural communications" (World Health Organization, 2001). Social factors, such as home life, technology, and personal relationships can also impact an employee's mental health (OECD, 2012). Many individual hindrances are out of an employer's control, but it is important to acknowledge them when promoting a positive mental health work environment.

Work culture factors that may impact mental health include unobtainable demands, limited autonomy, mundane tasks, poor colleague relationships, and lack of manager support (Matrix Insight, 2012). Having autonomy over one's work tends to be a common factor that can enhance or impede an employee's mental health. From the work content itself to the overall organizational environment, mental health can be affected in numerous ways within the workplace. In addition to content, organizational risk factors include amount of work, lack of autonomy in role, and limited mobility. The context of an employee's work also plays a factor in providing the individual with a "sense of self". Job context includes elements such as role in organization, reward, fairness, interpersonal relationships, physical working environment, and workplace culture (World Health Organization, 2005).

In the *EU Compass for Action on Mental Health and Well-being*, three categories were identified as sources of mental distress in the workplace: imbalanced job design, occupational uncertainty, and lack of value and respect in the workplace (Leka & Jain, 2017). There is increasing evidence about the role bullying and psychological harassment plays on an

individual's mental health. Consistent humiliation, passive-aggressive behavior, and inappropriate demands are all examples of psychological harassment. Commonly, these problems tend to negatively impact female, racial minority, and LGBTQ+ workers (World Health Organization, 2005).

According to the literature, it is evident numerous factors contribute to negative mental health in the workplace. In order to properly address mental health, a company needs to invest in a customized plan to both mitigate and prevent a poor mental health culture.

#### 4. Positive Mental Health Factors

While negative mental health triggers can severely impact an organization's culture and productivity, there is a real opportunity for the workplace to have a positive impact on employee mental well-being. Having healthy working relationships and a functional and dynamic support system, being recognized and rewarded, and job security may all contribute positively to an employee's mental state (World Health Organization, 2005). In fact, studies show that people with preexisting mental health conditions who find jobs see a significant improvement in their mental health (OECD, 2012). Unemployment itself poses a major threat to one's mental health due to financial and occupational uncertainty (OECD, 2008). An established social status, a routine time schedule, a sense of identity, achievement, and self-esteem, and prolonged social contact are all additional elements that may improve an employee's mental health (OECD, 2012). Work has become an essential part of many adult lives, and with work comes personal, economic, and social value. An individual's work contributes to a person's identity, helps to provide for one's family, and can make an individual feel as though he or she is contributing to society (World Health Organization, 2005).



## 5. Stigma

The stigma surrounding mental health has been researched and analyzed in as much depth as the broader subject of the state of mental health itself. Stigma is defined as marking a particular idea, thought, or condition with disgrace and judgment (World Health Organization, 2001). Stigma around mental health stunts the creation of a healthy workplace environment.

In 2005, four out of ten people thought that individuals with a psychiatric problem were a danger to others, and in 2010 one in five people in Europe found it challenging to talk to a person with a significant mental health problem. This problem escalated for individuals with mental health struggles themselves (partly due to communication setbacks from mental health disorders and partly due to the level of self-stigma). It should be noted, however, that the majority of individuals surveyed were aware that mental health treatment is possible (OECD, 2012).

Stigma limits the amount of communication and clarity around mental health not only in the workplace but also in the broader social discourse. This lack of knowledge causes misconceptions surrounding mental health to be taken as fact. These mental health myths may include beliefs that no treatment exists, that poor mental health is a sign of weakness, and that people with mental illnesses are unable to make decisions on their own (World Health Organization, 2005). Stigma can be a harmful deterrent in promoting a healthy working environment. A culture rooted in mental health stigma can result in workplace discrimination.

A 2017 survey conducted in partnership with Business in the Community and YouGov found that 13% of employees feel comfortable disclosing a mental health issue to their line manager. A little over half of all employees (53%) are comfortable talking about depression and anxiety at work (this number is up 3% from 2016). Of those employees who did decide to address their mental health in the workplace, 15% in 2017 were met with disciplinary actions

or demotion or were ignored, compared to 9% in 2016. Out of the nine equality and social issues in the survey, mental health still ranked as one of the most difficult subjects to talk about at work. With this stigma in place, it remains difficult to identify and treat employees who may be suffering from poor mental health. The survey identified that 33% of employees are reluctant to ‘make it formal’ by identifying as someone who suffers from mental illness and 29% feared the consequences that could arise from addressing mental health in the workplace (Business in the Community, 2017). In a survey of 101 employees who described their mental health as poor, less than half (43%) had chosen to disclose their mental status to their employer or manager (CIPD, 2016a).

Tackling stigma in the workplace can create a domino effect for employees by changing the entire mental health office landscape. The more that people open up about mental health, the greater the likelihood that others will feel comfortable and follow suit. In the end, being open and honest about mental health plays a large role in creating a healthy and productive work culture (Popiela, 2017).

## 6. Mental Health and Communications

The majority of research shows that mental health and communications go hand in hand. As previously mentioned, the content of an employee’s job can play a major role in their mental health. Having clear and consistent communication efforts around an employee’s role and impact in the organization may be beneficial to their overall mental health (World Health Organization, 2005). Before executing a corporate mental health strategy, the plan must have executive support and have the comprehensive ability to be communicated and understood by all employees (full-time, contractors, part-time, interns, etc.) (Burton, 2010).

To gather executive support, organizational leaders need to be sold on the idea of promoting a mentally healthy working environment. Different communication and research methods need to be presented to accurately communicate the rationale behind investing in workplace

mental health: these include tactics like infographics, storytelling, and case studies. An impactful place to begin is the amount of hours, days, and weeks lost due to mental health presenteeism and absenteeism, as well as quantifying the dollar amount of wasted money attributed to a poor mental health culture (Goetzel et al., 2018).

In addition to the importance of communicating the mental health program itself, there are several communication-related benefits associated with building out a proper mental health program. For instance, establishing an effective mental health program can enhance a company's reputation, create internal communication/branding opportunities, and work in tandem with current corporate social responsibility efforts.

Corporate mental health initiatives can be recognized publicly, thus improving a company's reputation. It should be noted, however, that if a company promotes its mental health initiatives it needs concrete evidence and metrics of positive change that have led to measurable business outcomes. Without supporting evidence, the program's credibility is lost. A better reputation can lead to higher stock value, attracting and retaining top talent, and positively influencing consumer purchasing behavior (Goetzel et al., 2018). Consumer power is also a leveraging tactic used to promote healthy workplace practices. For example, "fair trade" labels are getting increasingly more attention as more consumers are interested in supporting healthy and fair companies (Burton, 2010).

Companies have taken on innovative campaigns internally and externally to promote mental health awareness and support. Having clear, consistent, and targeted communications to back up corporate mental health programs is critical in producing successful results. From marketing campaigns to storytelling, these communication tactics can take on different forms and styles, but all have the ability to be effective in projecting a company's approach to mental health. Storytelling is an especially impactful tactic when it comes from a senior leader and is supported by examples of how the organization positively responded to his or her mental health situation (Popiela, 2017). The research is still inconclusive as to which

communication strategy or combination of communication strategies is most effective in creating a positive mental health culture.

Mental health initiatives give a company the opportunity to brand itself as a leader in a cause by which many people are impacted. It is crucial, however, that all messaging be in line with the company's values and beliefs. The messaging itself should also be customized based on employee groups; for instance, senior leaders may need different messaging than interns (Popiela, 2017). A Gallup survey showed that even though more than 85% of large employers offer a wellness program, only 60% of U.S. employees are aware of it. Of the 60% of aware employees, only 40% actually participate. This means that, at companies with wellness programs, only 24% of employees are participating (Harter & O'Boyle, 2014). In a similar 2016 survey conducted by CIPD, almost three in ten (28%) of employees were unaware of how their employer supports people who experience mental health problems. This means that, while a program might be established, it often fails to be communicated effectively throughout the organization. Knowledge and awareness are crucial in ensuring an employee feels supported in their mental health journey.

A healthy workplace and corporate social responsibility are two focuses that have the potential to overlap. An employee's health is greatly affected by both the physical and social environment that exists beyond the workplace (Burton, 2010). Bringing social responsibility into the wellness conversation helps to bring that "sense of self" into the workplace.

Employees are consistently trying to find their purpose and impact at an organization, and providing them with this outlet checks off both corporate good and mental well-being in the workplace. The younger population is increasingly devoted to helping the greater good and impacting the community at large; therefore, a mental health program that encompasses these characteristics will go far to engage and attract talent. (Popiela, 2017).

## 7. Millennials and Mental Health

As millennials take on more leadership roles and become the dominant generation in the workplace, it is important to review the literature on millennials and mental health. Craig Thorley and Will Cook define a millennial as someone born during or after the year 1982. Fast-paced technological changes, slow wage growth, and the new job skills created every day are all added pressures surrounding the workplace. Additionally, the rising pressure of perfectionism and efficiency may be having adverse consequences on millennials' health and job performance (Curran and Hill, 2017). A 2018 survey done by the Mental Health Foundation found that millennials feel most under pressure in the workplace and that 76% of millennials point to work as their main stressor (Millennials for Mental Awareness).

Younger employees are more likely to have a mental health problem compared to the current Generation X and baby boomers. Studies show that 37% are formally diagnosed with a mental health condition, compared to 29% of employees in their 50s. The higher percentage for millennials could be attributed to a growing awareness around mental health and the stigma that may still be present in older generations. It is also likely to be explained by a growing number of people who experience mental health issues during childhood and adolescence. However, studies show only around 44% of millennials suffering from mental health problems feel comfortable discussing them in the workplace, compared to 57% of employees in their 40s and 50s (Business in the Community, 2017).

Millennials are also more likely to experience a mental health disorder than previous generations of young people. In 1993, 15.4% of people ages 16-24 had experienced a common mental health condition in the past seven days. In a 2014 survey that number had grown to 18.9% (Thorley & Cook, 2017). Depression alone is rapidly increasing in teens and millennials, as 63% of teens and 47% of millennials have a major depression diagnosis. In comparison to the national population, millennials are more affected by behavioral health conditions impacting their mental health and emotional well-being. (BlueCross BlueShield).

Young women in general are at an even greater risk as they are three times more likely to suffer from a mental health disorder than men (Stansfeld et al., 2016).

### 8. Changing Working Conditions

The different types of work may be taking a toll on millennials' well-being. For instance, the gig economy, more freelance jobs, and part-time opportunities can lead to an unstable work environment. Part-time and temporary work have been associated with increased mental health problems. Additionally, job content may play a role in millennials' mental health as studies show that millennials are more likely to be in jobs for which they are overqualified, compared to previous generations (Thorley & Cook, 2017).

A millennial's income may also be detrimental to their mental health. There are a myriad of financial problems millennials face every day, such as student loan debt, healthcare, childcare, and an expensive housing market. These sort of investments in a millennial's education, health, future, and family create a sense of security, and without that a millennial's well-being could be on the decline. Thus, many millennials lack the protective factors prior generations had to keep them stable and at ease (Well Being Trust, 2017).

Flexible work is becoming more and more of a staple in today's working culture. Remote work or freelance jobs may improve one's mental health by widening access to flexible forms of working. However, by taking advantage of these opportunities millennials are at an increased risk of losing access to more permanent, financially secure, and fulfilling work (Thorley & Cook, 2017). Additionally, working from home limits daily social interaction, which could negatively impact one's mental health. Socially, millennials are known as "the loneliest generation," as many are marrying later and are less connected to political or religious communities (Ballard, 2019).

Research shows that mental health resources are wanted and needed by the millennial generation. The Canadian Mental Health Association found that 85% of graduates said their future employer's policy or approach to mental health was important to them, and 83% even said they'd be more likely to apply for a company that was more open about its mental health commitment. In a 2019 study conducted by Mind Share Partners, SAP, and Qualtrics, more than half of millennials have left a job for mental health-related reasons (Mind Share Partners, 2019). There is limited research about the programs millennials find most effective in addressing their mental health concerns and the ideal communication tactics to ensure these initiatives are properly implemented.

## 9. Literature Review Conclusion

According to a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development survey from 2016, the top programs that employers utilize when promoting a mentally healthy work environment include phased return to work (32%), access to flexible working (30%), access to occupational health services (27%), access to counselling services (27%), and employee assistance programs (19%).

Organizations have a real opportunity to expand their scope and tackle the mental health conversation in new and innovative ways. Several types of support that aren't as commonly used include resilience or mindfulness training (10%) and training for line managers in supporting people with mental health problems (10%). In addition, having mental health champions raise awareness about the importance of mental health and communicate these resources was at 5% (CIPD, 2016a). Programs should be twofold, focusing on both preventative and reactive measures.

Ignoring mental health in the workplace costs employers time, money, and talent. Complex changes in the way work functions in society means that individuals are faced with greater organizational and environmental pressures (CIPD, 2016a). One in five millennials reported

depression in the workplace, a 4% jump from baby boomers and Generation X (Bensinger, Dupont & Associates). Therefore, as more millennials continue to take on leadership positions in the workplace, corporate mental health initiatives must be at the forefront of an organization's business strategy. All in all, the literature emphasizes the real need for employers to go beyond their current measures to address mental health in the workplace.

## **V. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How do millennials feel about today's current corporate mental health environment?
2. How does the workplace impact millennials' mental health and well-being?
3. What does an ideal mentally healthy workplace look/feel like for millennials?
4. Does investing in mental health resources benefit the company at large?

## **VI. HYPOTHESIS**

1. How do millennials feel about today's current corporate mental health environment?

Hypothesis: Millennials find that while their companies do have established mental health programs in place, they are not designed nor communicated effectively. Mental health initiatives might be present, but millennials aren't aware of the initiatives and don't utilize the well-being programs at their disposal.

2. How does the workplace impact millennials' mental health and well-being?

Hypothesis: The workplace both positively and negatively impacts millennials' mental health. Millennials believe the workplace needs to be aware of its employees' mental health in order to properly address it. Many factors impact millennials' mental health in the workplace. According to the existing research, some of the primary stressors include salary, insurance/HR benefits, and work-life balance.



3. What does an ideal mentally healthy workplace look/feel like for millennials?

Hypothesis: For millennials, an ideal mentally healthy workplace is one that promotes mental health equally between in-person/direct and virtual/indirect communication platforms; one that allows for flexibility and work-life balance; and one that is sponsored by executive leadership. While millennials believe mental health is important in the workplace, because they are often distressed about their salaries the majority would not agree to a pay cut to implement mental health initiatives.

4. Does investing in mental health resources benefit the company at large?

Hypothesis: Investing in mental health resources does benefit the company at large. Millennials are more likely to apply for a job knowing the company has an established mental health/well-being program, but it would not greatly influence their decision to purchase an item or service from the company. Investing in mental health resources would increase millennial employee engagement and attract new and diverse talent.

## **VII. METHODOLOGY**

In order to make formal conclusions and analysis, it is crucial to first understand how the survey was designed, formulated, and distributed to the public. From June to September 2019, the research questions, hypothesis, protocol, and design were all under review by the thesis's advisor, Stephen Dishart, and Baruch's Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB reviewed the proposed research protocol to ensure it followed federal guidelines and accepted ethical principles. On July 30, 2019 IRB approved the research protocol titled "An Exploratory Study of How Millennials Approach and Communicate Mental Health in the Workplace."

## 1. Research Design

The survey was broken out into 19 questions with three filter questions, two demographic questions, and 14 core questions. The survey questions can be found in the addendum on page 45. The filter questions were placed in the beginning of the survey to ensure the respondents met the requirements. If the respondent did not consent, was outside the age of 22-38, or did not have a part-time or full-time job, this individual was thanked for their time and sent to the end of the survey. Because the research topic focuses on how millennials approach and communicate mental health in the workplace, the participants were required to be working millennials. Once the respondent consented to the survey, they were told exactly how mental health is defined for this research project: *In this survey, the term “mental health” is defined as the state of one’s psychological, emotional, and/or social well-being.* This was done to ensure respondents answered the questions based on how the project defined mental health and not their preconceived notions on the subject.

Question 9 utilized skip logic according to how the respondent answered the question.

Question 9 was, *What does your company do to address mental health in the workplace? (Select all that apply).* If the respondent chose the answer, “My company does not do anything to address mental health,” the skip logic was set to skip to question 12 because question 10 and 11 were for individuals who worked at companies currently addressing mental health in one way or another.

The question types included multiple choice, ranking, Likert, and checkbox. Nominal and ordinal data were both utilized in the survey. Six questions had open-ended response options to allow for slight modifications in survey responses; however, the remaining answers were closed choices to align with the quantitative analysis approach. The aim was 300 respondents with an even distribution of age, gender, and industry. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic and to gather the most truthful answers, all responses were anonymized and kept confidential in Qualtrics. The Qualtrics software captured all responses and helped to analyze the answers at the completion of the survey.

## 2. Distribution

The survey was open to the public for a two-week time period, from September 10 until September 24, 2019. Once the survey opened on September 10, it was distributed in several ways. Using email, social media, word-of-mouth, and text message, the respondents were recruited through numerous different mediums. In the pre-survey messaging, respondents were encouraged to pass along the link to other working millennials to create a snowball sample of research participants. The social media platforms used to share the survey link were Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter. Because the respondents consisted of people easily accessible and those willing to take the survey, it was considered a nonprobability sample. At the close of the survey on September 24, there were a total of 254 respondents.

# VIII. RESULTS

## 1. Accuracy

At a 95% confidence level, the margin of error for this survey was 6%. This means that all the data is within 6 percentage points of the real population value 95% of the time. Population size was taken from the Pew Research Center, estimating that there are 56 million millennials in the workforce.

$$z^* \text{ (desired confidence level 95\%)} = 1.96$$

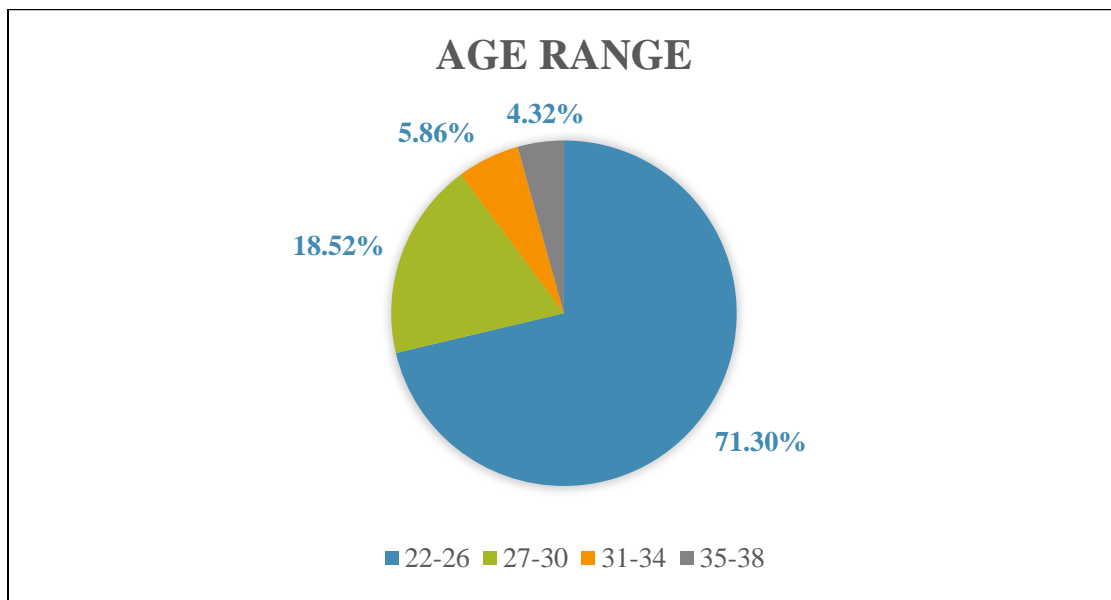
$$p \text{ (population size)} = 56,000,000$$

$$n \text{ (sample size)} = 254$$

$$\text{Margin of error} = z^* \sqrt{\frac{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{n}}$$

## 2. Participation

All respondents were between 22 and 38, the target millennial generation as defined by the Pew Research Center. The survey broke out age even further, asking the respondents to identify their age beyond the 16-year age gap. The age range of respondents can be seen in Figure 1 below. The majority of respondents (71.30%) were on the youngest side of being a millennial, at 22 to 26 years old, and only 4.32% were on the older side, ranging from 35 to 38 years old. Because of this large disparity, it was difficult to make accurate conclusions based on age range within the millennial population.



*Figure 1: Age Range of Survey Respondents*

One question asked respondents about their current employment status. Fifteen percent were part-time employees and 85% were full-time employees. Respondents were then asked to choose which gender they identify as: the response options included male, female, prefer not to say, and other (this response included an open text option). The seven individuals who picked other wrote in “nonbinary.” The gender breakdown can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	65	25.6%
Female	180	70.9%
Prefer not to say	2	.80%
Other: Nonbinary	7	2.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>100%</b>

Figure 2. Gender Breakdown of Respondents

The final demographic question asked about the respondent’s industry. The industry options included finance, food services, health care, hospitality, legal, nonprofit, media, technology, and other. Other was the most-chosen response, and these respondents wrote in their specific industries, which were widely varied. Most of the respondents worked in a white-collar profession, and there were a few blue-collar respondents. This survey did not ask respondents about level or job title. Figure 12 on page 42 displays the industry spread of the respondents.

### 3. Fundamental Analysis

#### A. Importance

The majority of millennials not only believe that it is crucial for a company to be cognizant of its employees’ mental health but also find it extremely important that there are resources available to support/address mental health in the workplace. Figure 3 and Figure 4, below, display how the respondents answered the survey questions.

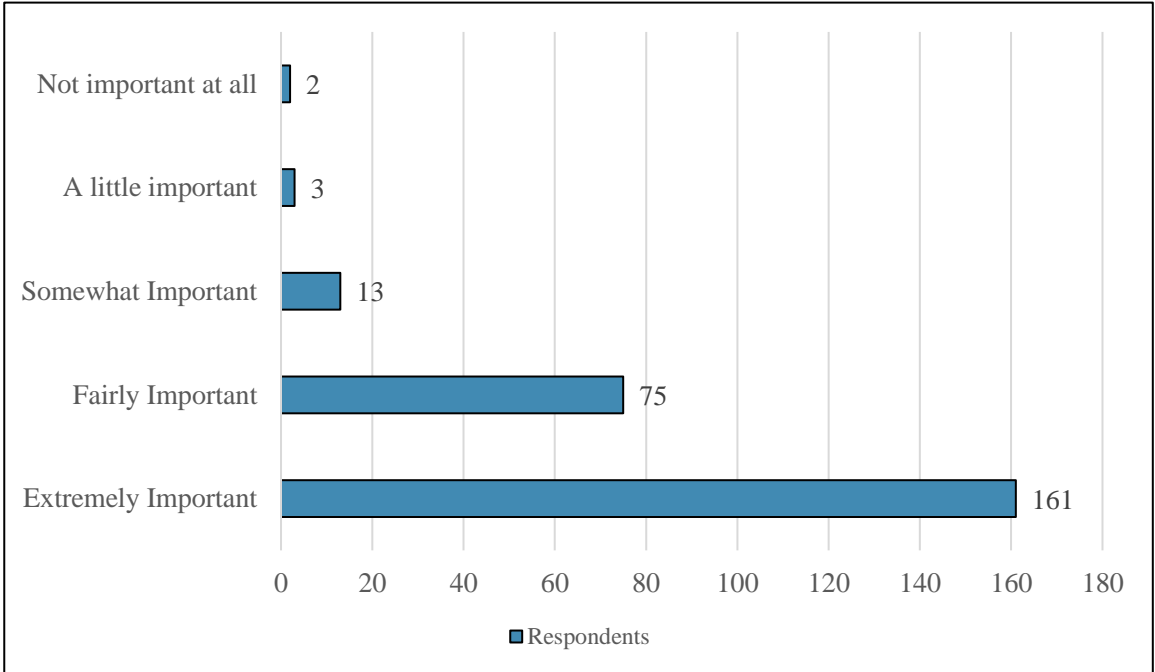


Figure 3. Graph displaying "How important do you think it is for a company to be cognizant of its employees' mental health?" results

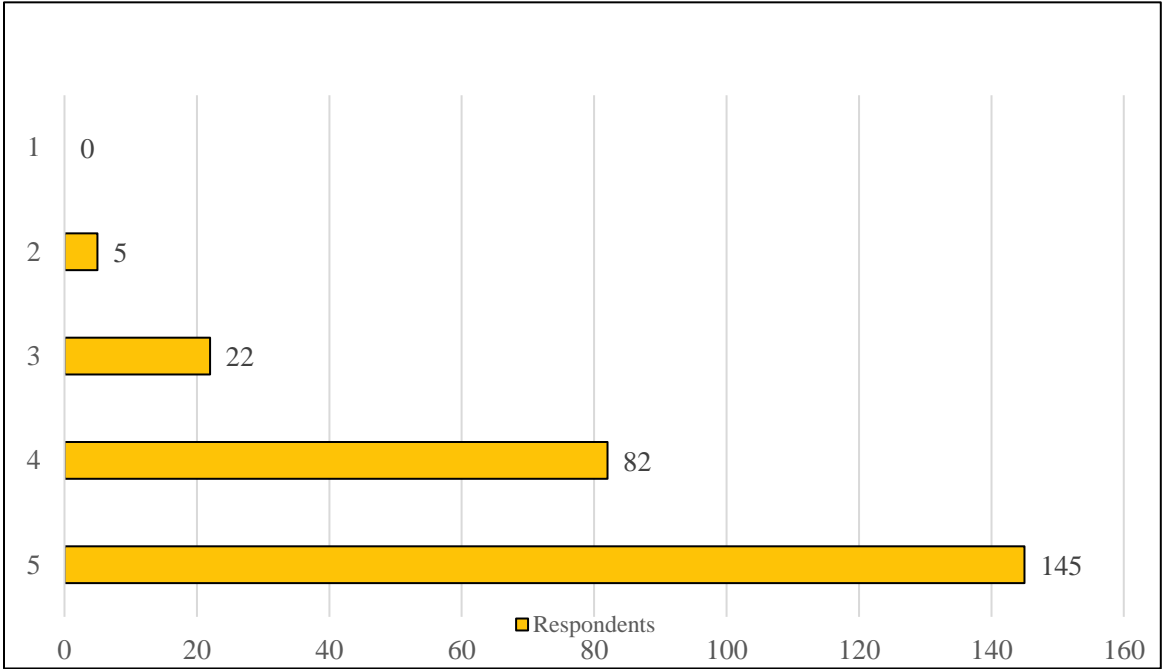


Figure 4. Graph displaying "On a scale of 1-5, how important do you think it is for a company to have some sort of resources/support to address mental health? (1 being the least important, 5 being the most important)" results

## B. Current State

In order to make conclusions about the ideal future state of corporate mental health, it is essential to identify how mental health is currently addressed in the workplace. Respondents were asked to identify what their company does to address mental health and how this is communicated. The results showed that 22% of companies do not do anything to address mental health. For the companies that do address mental health, the top three communication methods include email (57%), intranet (27%), and events (25%). The three mental health resources and initiatives that are least utilized in the workplace include partnering with outside organizations/nonprofits (11%), manager trust/empathy trainings (9%), and executive sponsors (3%). The breakdown of the top five initiatives companies are using to address mental health can be seen in Figure 5 below.

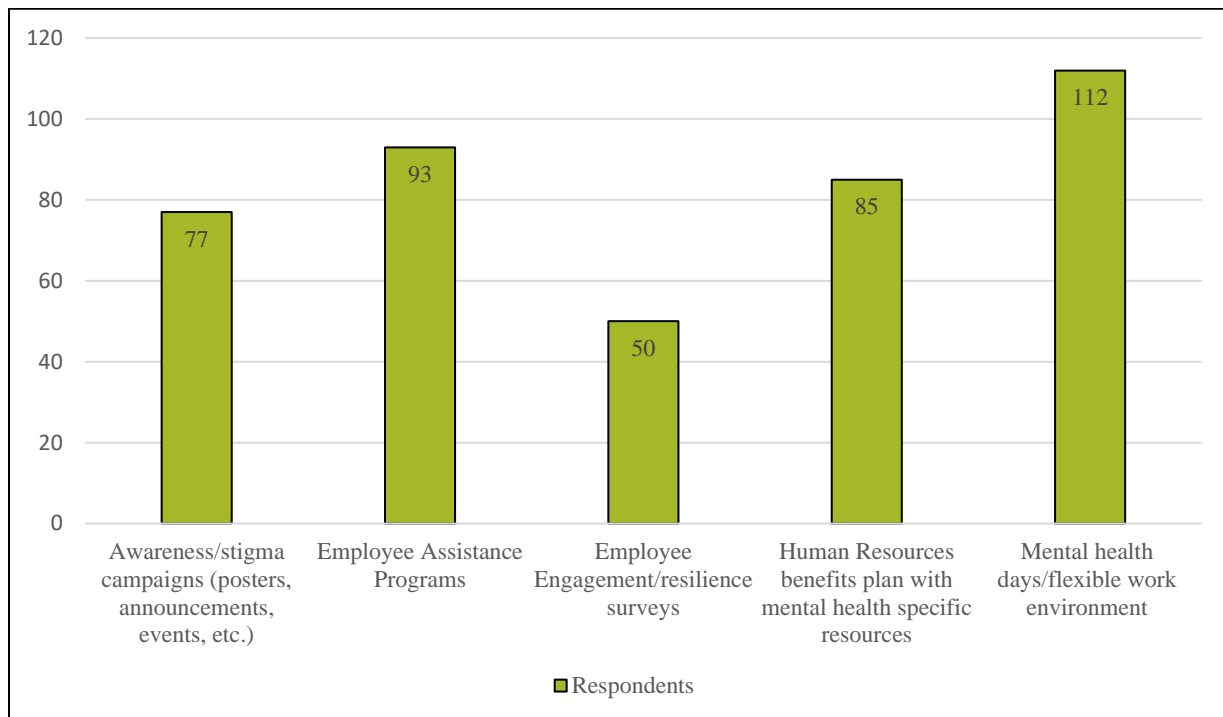


Figure 5. Top 5 results from survey question “What does your company do to address mental health in the workplace? (Select all that apply)”

### C. Stigma

A corporate mental health strategy can be greatly hindered by stigma and individual attitudes towards mental health. Mental health in the workplace must go beyond events and resources by infiltrating an organization’s culture. Figure 6, below, shows how prominent stigma is in the workplace based on a scale of 1-5. Fifty percent of respondents rated stigma around mental health in the workplace to be a 3 or greater, proving that stigma is extremely present in the corporate environment.

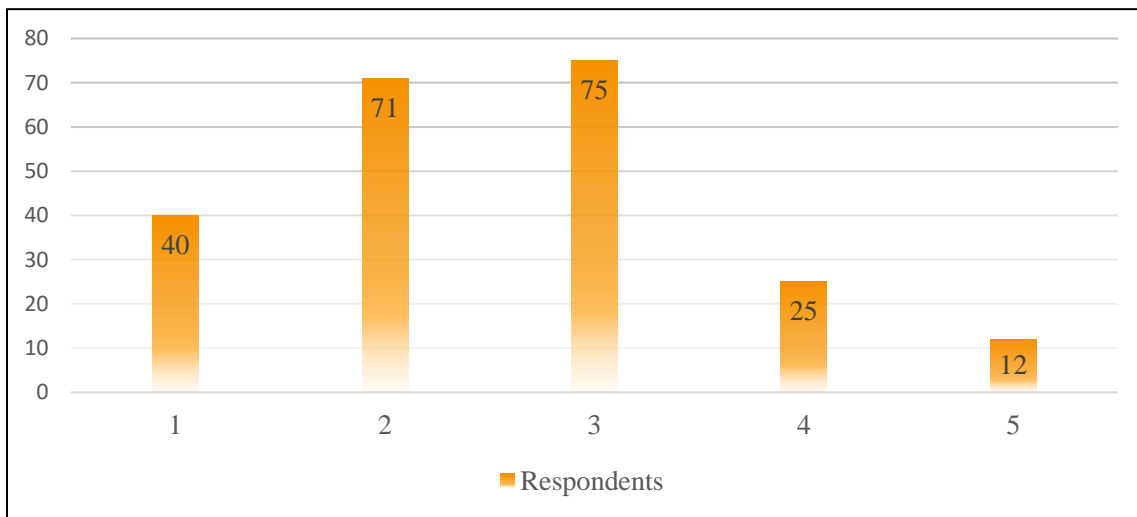


Figure 6. Results from survey question “On a scale of 1-5, how much stigma is there around the topic of mental health at your workplace? (1 being the least amount of stigma, 5 being the most amount of stigma)”

## IX. FINDINGS (Organized by Research Questions)

### 1. How do millennials feel about today’s current corporate mental health environment?

According to the survey results, 64% of millennials believe it is extremely important for companies to be cognizant of their employees’ mental health. Respondents were asked about how satisfied they are with the way their organization approaches mental health. Overall, 30% of millennials are dissatisfied, 37% are satisfied, and 33% of millennials are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the way their company approaches mental health. One hundred percent of respondents who are extremely dissatisfied with the way their company



approaches mental health do not participate in the current resources their company provides. This emphasizes that even though companies may be investing in mental health in the workplace, if it is unassessed or unmeasured then the impact on the organization remains minimal.

The percentages of respondents who are satisfied with the way their company approaches mental health and what resources their company offers as well as how they are communicated can be found in Figure 7 and Figure 8 below. Companies that offer mental health days/flexible work environments and companies that communicate mental health initiatives through email have the highest percentage of satisfied millennial employees. Thus, it can be determined that companies incorporating mental health days or flexible work cultures and companies communicating initiatives via email are more successful in keeping employees satisfied when it comes to mental health.

<b>Mental health initiatives that are available at companies with millennial employees who are satisfied with the way their company approaches mental health</b>	<b>Extremely satisfied</b>	<b>Moderately satisfied</b>	<b>Average</b>
Awareness/stigma campaigns (posters, announcements, events, etc.)	42.9%	50.7%	46.8%
Companywide trust/empathy trainings	35.7%	14.5%	25.1%
Employee Assistance Programs	57.1%	56.5%	56.8%
Employee engagement/resilience surveys	35.7%	26.1%	30.9%
Executive sponsors	0.0%	4.3%	2.2%
Human Resources benefits plan with mental health specific resources	71.4%	47.8%	59.6%
Manager trust/empathy trainings	35.7%	10.1%	22.9%
<b>Mental health days/flexible work environments</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>63.8%</b>	<b>81.9%</b>
My company does not do anything to address mental health	0.0%	2.9%	1.5%
Partner with outside organizations/nonprofits	35.7%	17.4%	26.6%
<b>OTHER:</b>	0.0%	5.8%	2.9%

Figure 7. Table outlining the percentage of respondents that are satisfied with the way their company approaches mental health overlapped with the resources/initiatives the company currently offers

<b>Mental health communication strategies that are present at companies with millennial employees who are satisfied with the way their company approaches mental health</b>	<b>Extremely satisfied</b>	<b>Moderately satisfied</b>	<b>Average</b>
Companywide meetings	42.9%	13.0%	28%
Digital screens/posters	50.0%	34.8%	42.4%
<b>Email</b>	57.1%	79.7%	68.4%
Events	42.9%	39.1%	41%
Intranet	21.4%	30.4%	26%
One-on-one meetings	42.9%	18.8%	30.9%
Social media	21.4%	13.0%	17.2%
Storytelling	21.4%	2.9%	12.2%
Team meetings	57.1%	18.8%	38%
Trainings	50.0%	26.1%	38.1%
Videos	28.6%	8.7%	18.7%
<b>OTHER:</b>	0.0%	4.3%	2.2%

Figure 8. Table outlining the percentage of respondents who are satisfied with the way their company approaches mental health overlapped with how these companies communicate mental health initiatives and resources

## 2. How does the workplace impact millennials’ mental health and well-being?

Mental health is often very individualized, therefore, finding patterns in how the workplace impacts millennial mental health is helpful in minimizing negative outcomes. Respondents were asked to rank different factors based on the degree to which they influence their overall mental well-being. The top three choices were the job itself, work-life balance, and their boss. When designing a corporate mental health strategy, it is important to keep these three aspects in mind as they greatly influence millennials’ overall well-being.

As hypothesized, the majority of millennials (52%) believe their job both positively and negatively impacts their mental health. The remaining respondents’ answers were as follows: 24% negative, 16% positive, and 8% not impacted either way.

## 3. What does an ideal mentally healthy workplace look/feel like for millennials?

When asked what the top three most effective ways your company can communicate mental health-related resources, the responses varied between in-person/direct and virtual/indirect

communication efforts. Team meetings was the top direct form of communication chosen and email was the top indirect form of communication chosen. The percentages of communication tactics millennials chose as their preferred method of communicating mental health resources can be seen in Figure 9 below.

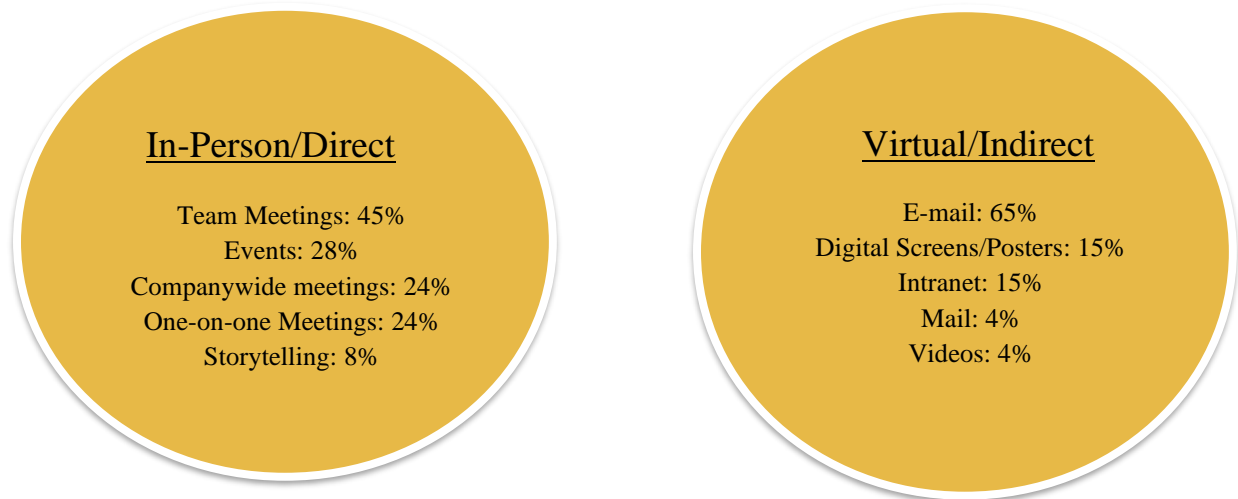


Figure 9. Visual outlining the percentage of respondents who picked the top three most effective ways for their company to communicate mental health-related resources

In addition to communication strategies, respondents were asked to pick the top three mental health resources/initiatives they would like their company to continue doing or to newly implement. Figure 10 on page 34 shows the comparison between the current mental health initiatives companies are doing versus the ones millennials would like to see. Key findings can be taken from the graph below to indicate some of the gaps present in current corporate mental health strategies.

- a. While many companies promote mental health and flexible work culture, there is a clear desire and greater need for additional resources across the board.
- b. When comparing Figure 10 to the findings in Figure 7 on page 31, the association between satisfied employees and those companies that promote flexible work environments is extremely high.
- c. It's evident a flexible work environment is extremely effective in promoting a healthy work culture.

- d. Awareness campaigns and Employee Assistance Programs are two resources companies invest in but, according to the results of the survey, are not what millennials prefer when envisioning their ideal corporate mental health culture.
- e. Companywide and manager trainings are desired more by millennials as well.
- f. There's a large gap between the number of millennials who have a Human Resources benefits plan with mental health-specific resources and the number who would like it as an option.
- g. There is a greater opportunity for employers to partner with outside organizations/nonprofits, as the graph below depicts that as a gap in what millennials experience in the workplace and what they would like to see in the future.

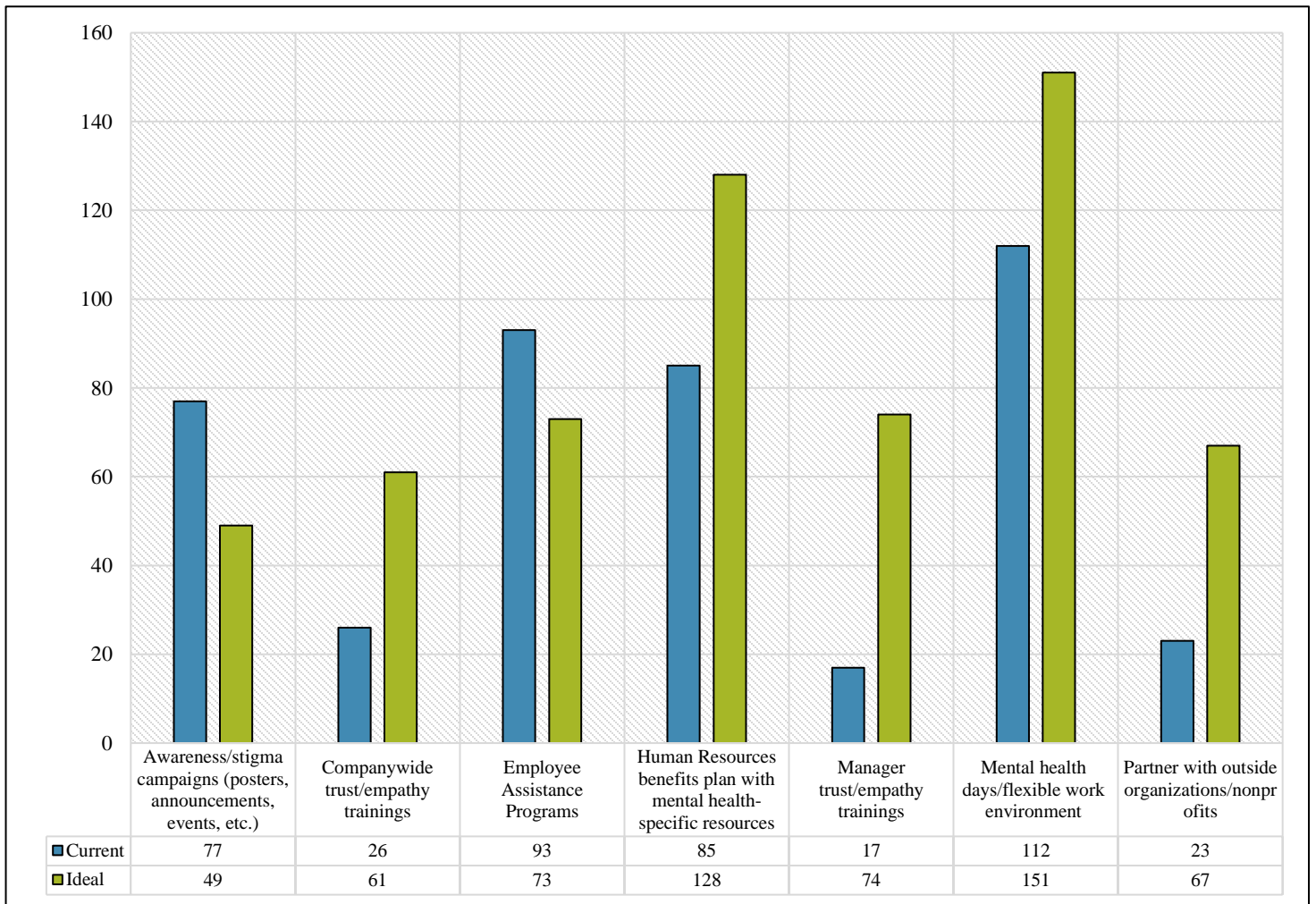


Figure 10. Bar graph comparing current mental health initiatives in the workplace versus the top three mental health initiatives millennials would like to see their company continue or start to do

Because salary is a stressor for many millennials, it was hypothesized that they would not take a pay cut to implement their preferred top three mental health resources; however, the results prove otherwise. In fact, 43% of millennials would choose to take a pay cut in exchange for mental health support in the workplace. The top mental health initiatives that millennials would take a pay cut for are mental health days/flexible work environments (67%), Human Resources benefits plan with mental health specific resources (55%), and manager trust/empathy trainings (40%).

#### 4. Does investing in mental health resources benefit the company at large?

From reducing presenteeism to increasing employee retention, investing in mental health resources can benefit a company in numerous different ways. This survey focused on the internal and external aspects a strong and well-communicated mental health program can have for a company.

From an internal standpoint, 74% of millennials are more likely to apply for a job knowing the company has an established mental health/well-being program. In a tight labor market, it is necessary for companies to stand out when it comes to recruiting and attracting new applicants. Because millennials do believe it is important that companies have some sort of resources/support to address mental health (Figure 4 on page 28), not having a program in place can be detrimental when it comes to hiring top talent.

Externally, having a prominent mental health program can also go as far as increasing sales numbers and attracting customers. Three out of every four millennials are more likely to purchase an item from a company that promotes mental health and wellness. This is where the balance of having a strong communication strategy goes hand in hand with a strong mental health culture. Without the proper communication tactics, even the most dynamic of mental health initiatives can go unnoticed.

## **X. DISCUSSION**

The analysis taken from this study adds on to the existing research done on mental health in the workplace. The literature surrounding this subject covered importance and prominence, while this research specifically focuses on the millennial perception of and approach to mental health in the workplace.

It remains difficult to pinpoint a single factor as the cause of a poor mental health culture, but the research and analysis done on the topic does allow for a greater understanding. The literature states that unobtainable demands, limited autonomy, and performing mundane tasks are all job elements that may negatively impact an employee's mental health. This coincides closely with the survey's findings as the highest ranked factor that influences millennials' workplace mental health was the job itself and the highest ranked number two factor was the workload. Poor colleague relationships, lack of manager support, and salary were additional elements highlighted in the literature, but remained on the middle to lower ranking in the survey as to how these factors impact millennials' mental health. These findings generally support existing research done by Matrix Insight in 2012.

These data also reinforce research concluding that workplace elements can positively and negatively impact an employee's mental health. A steady income, a structured routine, and daily socialization can all contribute positively to one's mental health. As shown in these data, 68% of millennials believe their job either positively and negatively or just positively impacts their mental health. When assessing a corporate mental health strategy, it is crucial to take into consideration both negative and positive workplace factors.

In a 2014 Gallup study, only 40% of employees who are aware of their companies' wellness program participate. According to this survey, 47% of millennials do not participate in the resources their company provides. One hundred percent of employees who are extremely dissatisfied and 56% of employees who are moderately dissatisfied with the way their company approaches mental health do not participate in any of the resources their company

offers. From time constraints to workplace stigma, there may be numerous reasons why millennials do not participate in their companies' mental health resources. It is the employers' responsibility to ensure corporate mental health resources are accessible and adaptable to accommodate their employees.

A flexible work culture goes a long way in setting the foundation for a positive mental health environment. The ability to take time off without repercussions is highly valued from the millennial worker's perspective. A 2016 survey from CIPD stated that 30% of employers offer access to flexible working. In this survey, 44% of companies have mental health days/flexible work environments as part of their company culture. Even though the trend is going up, 15% of millennials in this study currently work at companies that don't have mental health days/flexible work environments, but these millennials would like to have such options if creating their ideal corporate mental health strategy.

It should be noted that many of the respondents were professional, white-collar workers, who notably have more access to this type of resource. Hourly and blue-collar workers tend to have less flexibility and are often unable to take off without it impacting their salary.

## **XI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Communications needs to be at the forefront of every corporate mental health strategy.**

A corporate mental health strategy is only as strong as the communication efforts behind it. Whether you are implementing a brand-new mental health culture or updating an existing strategy, it is essential to incorporate the communications team into the planning and execution processes. Millennials want a combination of in-person and virtual communication approaches when it comes to keeping them up-to-date about mental health-related resources.

As seen in Figure 11 below, email is the most popular form of communication and the one millennials find most effective overall. However, there is room for many mental health strategies to improve in the way they are communicated to millennials. When comparing current mental health communication strategies to the ideal, the three largest gaps consist of team meetings (32%), email (20%), and companywide meetings (15%). This means that, when companies are crafting mental health strategies, it is important to diversify communication approaches in order to achieve effective change.

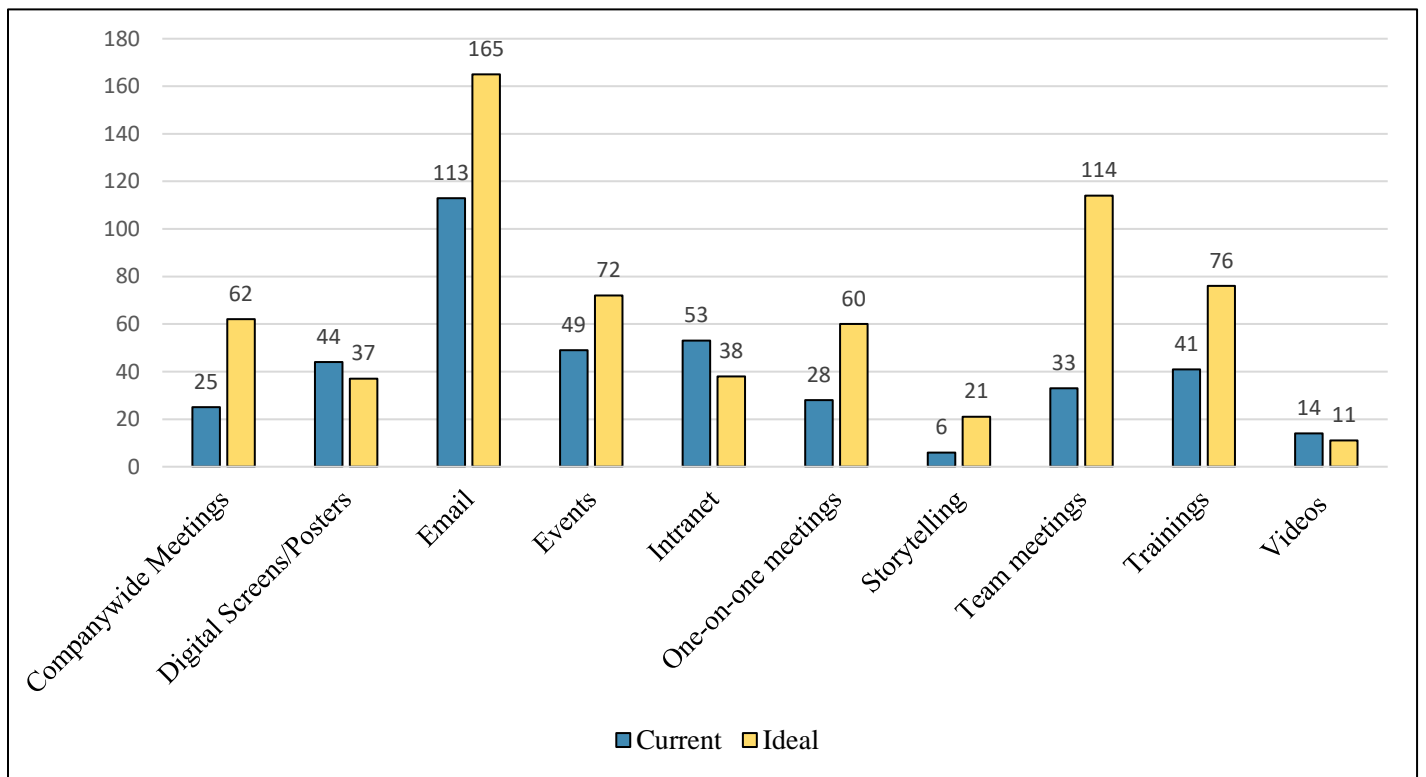


Figure 11. Bar graph comparing millennials' current mental health communication tactics in the workplace versus the top three mental health communication tactics millennials find most effective

## 2. One size does NOT fit all corporate mental health programs.

Because mental health is very individualized, it remains a challenge to create a realistic mental health culture that satisfies all employees' needs. As with communication tactics, mental health programs must be diversified and measured in order to generate positive change. Figure 10 on page 34 compares the way the respondents' companies address mental



health to the ideal approach millennials would choose when designing their own mentally healthy workplace. Mental health days/flexible work environments are not only a highly utilized approach but are also chosen the most by respondents when crafting their ideal mental health strategy. Ultimately, this research shows that 60% of millennials associate a positive mental health culture with one that incorporates a flexible work environment. Taking a mental health day without fear of punishment goes beyond the occasional summer Friday or doctor appointment: the underlying notion of a flexible work environment is one rooted in trust. Fostering a culture where managers and associates trust one another goes a long way in laying the foundation for a mentally healthy company.

The top three gaps between current mental health initiatives and what millennials would like to see their companies begin to implement include manager trust/empathy trainings (22%), partnering with outside organizations/nonprofits (17%), and Human Resources benefits plans with mental health-specific resources (17%). Thus, as companies go about establishing or tweaking their corporate mental health strategy, it is recommended that they consider investing in at least one of these three initiatives. The gap between current and ideal means there is a greater need for these resources that aren't currently available elsewhere. Also, if these initiatives are properly implemented and communicated, it can help the company stand out as a leader in workplace mental health.

When crafting a corporate mental health strategy, companies don't need to start from scratch. A great deal of companies have developed robust mental health cultures and the case studies that come out of these journeys are useful roadmaps for other organizations. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a section on Workplace Health Promotion. Within this section, Prudential Financial, Certified Angus Beef, and Tripler Arm Medical Center are showcased for how they incorporate corporate mental health programs. However, because a corporate mental health plan is not a one-size-fits-all model, initiatives must be continuously measured and improved based on quantitative and/or qualitative employee feedback.

3. A corporate mental health strategy must feed into the organization's overall business strategy.

A corporate mental health strategy must align closely with the company's overall business strategy; otherwise it will come off as inauthentic and disjointed. Stigma towards mental health is deeply rooted in an organization and greatly hinders the progress of achieving a healthy corporate environment. To combat years of keeping mental health separate from the corporate world, an organization needs to ensure employee mental health is intertwined within the greater business strategy and company values. Otherwise, the culture shift will come off as disingenuous and, thus, employees will not be encouraged to utilize the resources. Over half (59%) of millennials who do not participate in the mental health resources their company provides rated the presence of mental health stigma a 3 or greater out of 5. Ultimately, for a corporate mental health strategy to flourish, it must coincide with the organization's goals and future direction to help mitigate the presence of stigma.

## **XII. LIMITATIONS**

1. Age

Because the millennial generation spans 16 years, a more even age distribution would have led to more conclusions regarding the differences that exist within the millennial generation. For instance, do older millennials ages 35-38 approach mental health differently than younger millennials ages 22-26? Do millennials in the middle range from 27-34 find mental health resources more or less important than the ones on the higher and lower ends of the generation? Because 71% of respondents were on the youngest side of the millennial age range and only 4% were on the oldest side, it was difficult to translate the data into reliable findings regarding age disparities.

## 2. Industry

Even though question 6 of the survey asked respondents what industry they work for, the answers were too scattered to make definitive conclusions. “Other” was the response chosen most, at 32%, and the respondents wrote in their specific industries, making the results too widespread to analyze. In the future, a study particularly about how millennials in the same or different industries approach mental health in the workplace would be helpful when looking at the current corporate mental health state across the board. It would also be useful to know if any patterns exist in current corporate mental health programs within industries. For instance, do finance industries utilize executive sponsors more than healthcare? Do millennials who work at nonprofits find there is more or less stigma surrounding mental health versus millennials who work in education? What industry is the most satisfied overall with the way their company approaches mental health? Targeting specific industries would help identify successes and improvement opportunities that exist in the corporate mental health field. The industry spread of survey respondents can be seen in Figure 12 below.

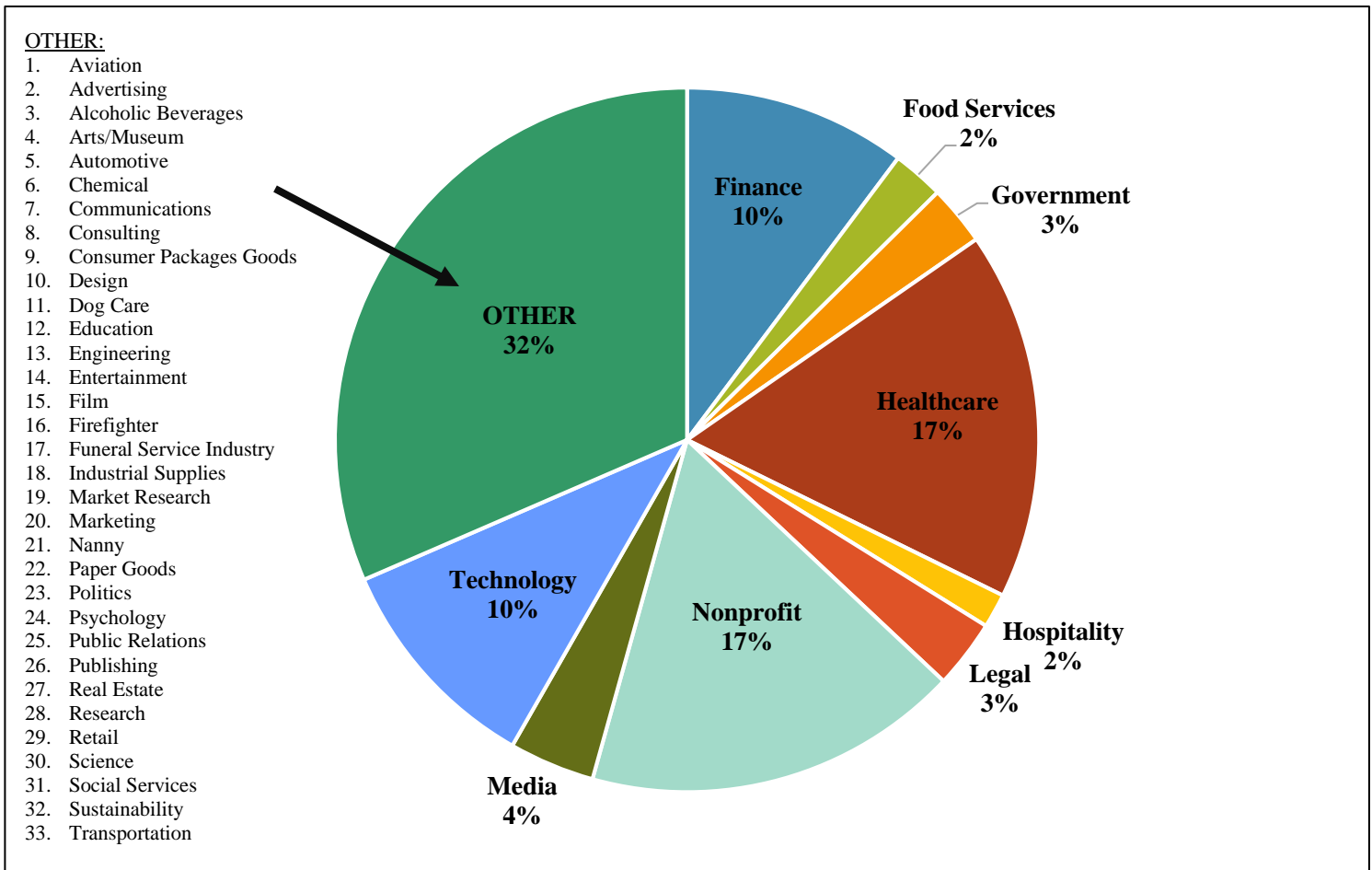


Figure 12. Pie Chart displaying the different industries survey respondents work for with the “OTHER” open-ended text responses included

### 3. Job Level

The survey did not ask about job title or level in the organization. If done again, it would be useful to see how different titles approach mental health in the workplace. Do managers have an easier time discussing mental health at work than the entry-level associates? What do employees higher up in the organization find to be the biggest job factor to influence their mental health?

### 4. Sampling

Because the respondents were contacted via LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, the sample size was considered nonprobability sampling. Additionally, once the initial pool of

respondents completed the survey, they were encouraged to pass it along to anyone they knew who might qualify. This process is known as snowball sampling, which is also an example of nonprobability sampling. Nonprobability sampling means the total population did not have equal chances of being selected, and this was done due to time restraints and for convenience purposes.

### **XIII. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

#### **1. Diversity**

Because of the subject's depth and scope, there are countless ways to take the current findings and use them to support future work around corporate mental health and communications. A possible future direction could be for a researcher to hone in specifically on different cultural factors outside of the workplace that could impact corporate mental health. For instance, do African American millennial employees want different types of mental health support in the workplace? Are women more likely to be affected by office stigma surrounding mental health? What do LGBTQIA+ millennials want out of their organization's corporate mental health strategy? To design the most optimal corporate mental health program, taking in diverse perspectives will help to elevate the strategy to a fuller potential.

#### **2. Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research could also be utilized to gather more specific data using firsthand stories about millennials' experiences with mental health in the workplace. It would be interesting to see if the qualitative research lines up with the quantitative findings from the survey. Focus groups could be utilized to test out new corporate mental health initiatives and get more detailed feedback about how millennials approach mental health in the workplace. Interviewing millennials would help to bring the data and research to life by backing it up with narratives.

### 3. Generation Z

The research around corporate mental health communications should not stop at millennials. Generation Z is made up of individuals born between the years 1997-2015, meaning the oldest members of this generation are already in the workforce at age 22. Millennials may have changed how companies approach mental health in the workplace, but as the next generation enters the workforce it is important to understand the best ways to continue to communicate corporate mental health initiatives. A survey from Mind Share Partners revealed that half of millennials have quit a job partially due to mental health reasons, and this number goes up to 75% for Generation Z. As the conversation around mental health changes and adapts, the research must continue to adapt along with it to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

## **XIV. CONCLUSION**

Every company has a mental health culture. Whether there is a formal strategy or not, the way a company approaches mental health appeals to its applicants, consumers, investors, and employees. A strong mental health culture provides a company the opportunity to stand out amongst its industry peers. From reputation management to decreasing employee turnover, mental health is a substantial value add for any company. The negative risks associated with not having a healthy work environment include costly litigations, fines, and even imprisonment for executives who cultivate an abusive environment.

However, a corporate mental health strategy can only go so far in changing an organization's culture. Clear and consistent messaging must also be utilized or else the investment will fall short. Now more than ever, companies are being looked at based on how they approach mental health, both to prevent and to mitigate mental health-related problems that may occur.

The workplace has an opportunity to foster either a poor or a positive mental health culture. The best corporate cultures don't settle for mitigating mental health-related issues, but

instead focus on creating an overarchingly positive and open mental health environment. The mental health landscape is changing, and it is evident companies that are slow to adapt will be severely impacted. Millennials know corporate mental health is important; it is time companies share in that very same mindset.

## **XV. ADDENDUM**

### 1. Survey

- 1) By participating in this study, you agree to provide the most honest answers you can. All responses will be anonymized, so that neither the research team nor additional respondents will know which is yours.

For any questions or further information please click [Baruch Consent Form](#).

Do you consent to this survey?

- a. Yes, I consent
  - b. No, I do not consent [will be sent to end screen as this is a filter question]
- 2) *In this survey, the term “mental health” is defined as the state of one’s psychological, emotional, and social well-being.*
- 3) How old are you?
    - a. < 22 [will be sent to end screen as this is a filter question]
    - b. 23-26
    - c. 27-30
    - d. 31-34
    - e. 35-38
    - f. > 38 [will be sent to end screen as this is a filter question]
- 4) What is your employment status?
    - g. Full-time
    - h. Part-time
    - i. Student only [will be sent to end screen as this is a filter question]
    - j. Unemployed [will be sent to end screen as this is a filter question]
- 5) I identify my gender as...
    - a. Female
    - b. Male

- c. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Prefer not to say
- 6) What industry do you work in?
- a. Finance
  - b. Food services
  - c. Government
  - d. Health care
  - e. Hospitality
  - f. Legal
  - g. Nonprofit
  - h. Media
  - i. Retail
  - j. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) How important do you think it is for a company to be cognizant of its employees' mental health?
- a. Not important at all
  - b. A little important
  - c. Somewhat important
  - d. Fairly important
  - e. Extremely important
- 8) On a scale of 1-5, how important do you think it is for a company to have some sort of resources/support to address mental health? (1 being the least important, 5 being the most important)
- a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4
  - e. 5
- 9) What does your company do to address mental health in the workplace? (Select all that apply)
- a. Awareness/stigma campaigns (Posters, announcements, events, etc.)
  - b. Companywide trust/empathy trainings
  - c. Employee engagement/resilience surveys
  - d. Employee Assistance Programs
  - e. Executive sponsors
  - f. Human Resources benefits plan with mental health-specific resources
  - g. Manager trust/empathy trainings
  - h. Mental health days/flexible work environments



- i. Partner with outside organizations/nonprofits
  - j. My company does not do anything to address mental health (if chosen use skip logic to skip to question 12)
  - k. OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) Do you participate in one or more of the resources your company provides to address mental health?
- a. Yes, I participate in one of the above resources.
  - b. Yes, I participate in more than one of the above resources.
  - c. No, I do not participate in the above resources my company provides.
- 11) How does your company communicate mental health-related initiatives? (Select all that apply)
- a. Companywide meetings
  - b. Digital screens/posters
  - c. Email
  - d. Events
  - e. Intranet
  - f. Mail
  - g. One-on-one meetings
  - h. Storytelling
  - i. Team meetings
  - j. Trainings
  - k. Videos
  - l. OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) What would you like to see your company do (or continue doing) to promote a mentally healthy workplace? (Select 3)
- a. Awareness/stigma campaigns (posters, announcements, events, etc.)
  - b. Companywide trust/empathy trainings
  - c. Employee engagement/resilience surveys
  - d. Employee Assistance Programs
  - e. Executive sponsors
  - f. Human Resources benefits plan with mental health-specific resources
  - g. Manager trust/empathy trainings
  - h. Mental health days/flexible work environments
  - i. Partner with outside organizations/nonprofits
  - j. OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) Would you agree to take a pay cut to implement the three chosen benefits from the previous question? If so, what percentage?
- a. I would not agree to take a pay cut.

- b. Yes, 1-3%
- c. Yes, 4-6%
- d. Yes, 7-9%
- e. Yes, > 10%

14) What would be the most effective way for your company to communicate mental health-related resources to you? (Select 3)

- a. Companywide meetings
- b. Digital screens/posters
- c. Email
- d. Events
- e. Intranet
- f. Mail
- g. One-on-one meetings
- h. Storytelling
- i. Team meetings
- j. Trainings
- k. Videos
- l. OTHER: \_\_\_\_\_

15) How satisfied are you with the way your company approaches mental health?

- a. Extremely satisfied
- b. Moderately satisfied
- c. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- d. Moderately dissatisfied
- e. Extremely dissatisfied

16) Does your job positively or negatively impact your mental health?

- a. Positively
- b. Negatively
- c. Both
- d. Neither

17) Rank the below factors based on the degree to which they influence your overall mental well-being. (1 being the greatest influence, 9 being the least influence)

- 1) The job itself
- 2) Insurance/HR benefits
- 3) My boss
- 4) My coworkers
- 5) My company's mission/values
- 6) My team
- 7) My workload

- 8) My work-life balance
  - 9) Salary
- 18) On a scale of 1-5, how much stigma is there around the topic of mental health at your workplace? (1 being the least amount of stigma, 5 being the most amount of stigma)
- a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
  - d. 4
  - e. 5
- 19) Would you be more or less likely to apply for a job knowing the company has an established mental health/well-being program?
- a. I would be more likely to apply for the job.
  - b. It would have no influence on my desire to apply for the job.
  - c. I would be less likely to apply for the job.
- 20) Would you be more or less likely to purchase an item from a company that promotes mental health and wellness?
- a. I would be more likely to purchase the item.
  - b. It would have no influence on my purchasing decision.
  - c. I would be less likely to purchase the item.

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