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Millennials in the Workplace: Recalling Critical Incidents of Negative Feedback

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 COMMUNICATIONS

By

Jocelyn Key

Graduate Student's Name

May 20, 2022

Date

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

This project also has been presented at colloquium to departmental colleagues and faculty.

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Abstract

The Millennial generation has become one of the largest groups in the workplace and reports needing constant feedback from their supervisors. However, previous research has suggested that while Millennials desire feedback, they only want it to be positive. This research study examined the critical incidents of negative feedback that Millennials employees and supervisors recall receiving and giving. The study consisted of a qualitative survey with multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The sample comprised of 61 respondents who identified as a Millennial – born between 1981-2000 and between the ages of 22-41 – and full-time employees, the equivalent of 35 or more hours a week. Results show that Millennial employees are open to hearing negative feedback but want to receive it with empathy and concrete evidence to support it. For Millennial supervisors, the results indicated that while they feel anxious giving their employees negative feedback, they do so to help their careers. Millennials are open to negative feedback. Understanding how to provide it to them is crucial for the future of the workplace.

Keywords: Millennials, negative feedback, coaching, performance management, feedback

Millennials in the Workplace

Introduction

Millennials, like past generations, are eager to change the workplace according to their values and experiences. They prefer jeans over suits, text messaging over face-to-face conversations, and working from home over working in the office (Alsop, 2008). These differences, at times, put Millennial employees, those born between 1981 and 2000 (Ferri-Reed, 2012), at odds with their co-workers from other generations.¹ As of 2017, Millennials made up about 35% of the U.S. workplace equaling approximately 56 million employees (Fry, 2018). By 2025 this percent is expected to increase to 75% of the workforce (Hall, 2016). Millennials' common experiences include witnessing historical events such as the Columbine High School shootings, September 11 terrorist attacks, or Hurricane Katrina (Alsop, 2008). Other generations in the workplace include Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980; and Generation Z, born after 2000 (Bartz, Thompson, and Rice, 2017).

Millennials have gained the reputation of being job-hoppers in the workplace because, as the name suggests, they change jobs every few years. Compared to Gen X and Baby Boomer employees, their job-hopping has put companies on edge and managers scrambling to retain these employees. A 2016 Gallup report showed that 21% of Millennials had changed their job in the previous year costing the U.S. economy an estimated \$30.5 billion due to the lack of productivity and the need to hire and train new employees. The report also found that 60% of Millennials were open to job opportunities; this was 15 percentage points more than non-

¹ In 2020, the Pew Research Center updated the definition for Millennials citing it as someone who was born between 1981 and 1996 (Fry, 2020). This study defines Millennials off previous research, allowing for a fair comparison to the literature and a larger sample.

Millennials. Additionally, 55% of Millennials were not engaged at work, compared to 50% for Generation X and 48% for Baby Boomers (Adkins, 2019). Further, in the summer of 2021, many Millennials were predicted to exit the workforce – this is a direct response to the Coronavirus. During “The Great Resignation,” 78% of Millennials stated their interest in switching their jobs; 22% had changed jobs in the previous six months (Capital, 2021).

One distinguishing characteristic of many Millennials is their constant need for feedback compared to their predecessors. Baby Boomers are more likely to respect the status quo and rarely ask for feedback from supervisors. Yet Millennials want daily coaching and recognition for their work. Managers often find it challenging to adapt to the differences in these employee groups. But as the largest group in the workplace, the need to understand the relationship between Millennials and feedback, especially negative feedback, is crucial now more than ever. For companies to retain Millennials, they must know how these employees react to negative feedback. This knowledge can be used to offer supervisors and employers insights into how to maintain and engage Millennials for the future of the workplace. Poorly communicated feedback can impact the turnover and engagement rates of Millennial employees in their companies.

This research study investigates critical incidents of giving and receiving negative feedback from Millennial employees and supervisors and what these experiences mean for employees, supervisors, and the future of the workplace. To provide the foundation for this study, four areas of the literature are reviewed: (a) feedback and its related terms, (b) Millennials’ need for frequent feedback, (c) Millennials’ classification as “trophy kids” and “narcissists,” and (d) Millennials as supervisors.

Literature Review

Defining Feedback, Coaching, and Performance Management

The term “feedback” can be defined differently and is closely related to terms such as coaching and performance management. Let’s explore these definitions further.

Feedback

According to Bartz, Thompson, and Rice (2017), feedback describes performance. Specifically, it is “the activity of providing information to the Millennial staff member in relationship to how her/his performance meets expectations” (p. 7). Further, positive and negative feedback should allow employees to correct inappropriate behavior while recognizing what they do well (Hall, 2016). From a manager’s perspective, the goal of providing feedback should be to challenge their staff and offer tips to ensure they are completing their jobs to the best of their abilities. From employees’ points of view, seeking feedback is a way to learn more about improving their performance (Morrison and Bies, 1991). Managers provide feedback through face-to-face conversations or computer-mediated communications such as instant messaging platforms, email, social media, or over the phone (Watts, 2007).

A study conducted by Farooq and Khan (2011), in which 150 respondents answered a questionnaire about training and feedback, showed that feedback offered employees the assistance they needed to improve their tasks and performance and achieve their goals. The study also indicated that getting feedback increased the employees’ level of momentum, which led to them staying at their job.

Coaching

Coaching is “the assistance given to *improve performance*” versus simply describing it (Bartz, Thompson, and Rice, 2017, p. 7). The goal of coaching is for supervisors to work

collaboratively with their employees to improve their work performance. Grimson (2008) adds that coaching focuses more on the individual. By coaching, supervisors can connect with employees and offer practical guidance on enhancing skills and abilities to improve morale and performance. Sweeney (2007) builds upon this idea while adding that managers who use coaching should engage employees in a coaching plan, assess their activities, track results, and encourage and celebrate their employee's success.

Performance Management

Lastly, performance management is defined as the process of improving the performance of an individual. Performance management aims to “establish a high-performance culture in which individuals and teams take responsibility for the continuous improvement of business processes and for their own skills” (Armstrong, 2008, p. 2). Performance management is part of a more extensive system to help managers evaluate their employees' work. It enables employees to communicate with their managers and establish an open, ongoing dialogue. They can review the job responsibility, assess whether they are meeting them, and set goals to improve their skills and job performance. The overall purpose of performance management is to manage expectations and uphold the organization's values (Armstrong, 2008). For the sake of this paper, performance appraisal is a synonym for performance management. Performance appraisal is the “formal assessment and rating of individuals by their managers,” which usually occurs during annual reviews (Armstrong, 2008, p.9).

Negative Feedback and the Workplace

Returning to the concept of feedback, it is crucial to understand negative feedback because of its perceived relationship with Millennials which will be discussed later in the paper. Negative feedback aims to fill “a discrepancy between employee behavior and organizational

standards” (Xing, Sun, J., & Jepsen, D., 2021, p.1244). In simpler terms, negative feedback is constructive criticism given to employees by managers and often highlights what they are doing wrong as opposed to recognizing their accomplishments. When managers provide negative feedback, they highlight the areas in which their employee is struggling. But according to Geddes and Baron (1997), managers are often fearful of providing negative feedback out of fear of aggression from their employees. However, the ability of managers to offer their employees negative feedback is something Deborah Bright (2000) suggests earns managers credibility, leading to employee trust. When employees trust their managers, they are more likely to stay. Thus, negative feedback becomes a crucial tool for retaining employees.

Millennials Want Feedback

For Millennials, effective feedback is a must. In fact, 70.8% of managers spent more time coaching and providing feedback to their Millennial employees than they did for employees in other generation groups (Ferri, 2014). The reason for this finding is that “Millennials expect close relationships and frequent feedback from supervisors” (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 229), something that is needed more today by younger workers than in previous generations. Millennials also expect to have open communication with their supervisors, which means receiving information that might be reserved for individuals with seniority and ruffling the feathers of their older colleagues (Myers and Sadaghiani, 2010). And the feedback Millennials receive should be honest, direct, and without any hidden agenda (Hall, 2016).

The need to have constant feedback comes from a Millennial’s desire to know how they can improve and advance (Ferri-Reed, 2014).

Millennials seek ample feedback because it provides assurance that they are continuing to move along a linear, progressive path...Millennial employees thrive in organizations that

similarly create a clear path to success by identifying employees' ideal skills, creating realistic timelines for promotions, and detailing career progression. (Hershatler and Epstein, 2010, p. 218)

Frequent feedback offers Millennials a chance to know if they are on the path toward advancing in their careers, which they find to be a crucial marker for success.

Researchers suggest that the best way to offer feedback is to establish a coaching relationship.

Yers² want managers who are teachers who can help them grow and improve. Since they're the 'education is cool' generation, position yourself as a dynamic source of their learning. Provide the resources, tools, and the learning goals they need to progress 'just-in-time.' Gen Yers learn best, as most people do when they know they will need the knowledge or skill to succeed. (Martin, 2005, p. 43)

Further, managers should coach by asking intuitive questions to help Millennials discover their strengths. By learning their strengths, they will deliver on them and increase their job performance (Chillakuri and Mogili, 2018). For managers wondering how to provide Millennials with feedback, Ray and Singh (2018) highlight the benefits of the Millennial generation being comfortable with technology. Giving feedback can be done through chats, messages, emails, video chats, phone, or face-to-face interactions.

Along with emphasizing the strengths, the literature suggests that the feedback managers provide is positive. "Consistently let Yers know when they've done a good job. Give them immediate praise, recognition, and rewards for great performance. Tie rewards and incentives to

² Generation Y or Yers is another way to refer to Millennials. For the sake of this study, only the term Millennials will be used to reference those from this generation.

one thing only: performance” (Martin, 2005, p. 44). Positive feedback is a way for Millennials to feel confident and secure in their job.

Millennials, Negative Feedback, Coaching, and Performance Reviews

Despite the consensus that Millennials require and want constant feedback, researchers suggest that managers only highlight successes and praise the Millennial employee while refraining from providing any criticism. “Although millennials eagerly welcome feedback – and even seek it out, they don’t handle negative feedback very well at all at times” (Ferri-Reed, 2012, p.18). Additionally, giving Millennials negative feedback can result in aggressive responses (Anderson, A.A. Buchko, and K.J. Buchko, 2016). This aggressive behavior might include screaming, saying profanity, and becoming physical and violent. The general belief is that Millennials believe they deserve praise for just trying hard (Canedo, Graen, Grace & Johnson, 2017). The overall theory is that Millennials’ inability to handle negative feedback stems from being raised with constant parental praise. As a result, when they hear negative feedback, they will be likely to get angry and view it as an attack on their self-worth (Beal, 2016). Due to this perception, Millennials are often considered “trophy kids” and narcissists. What’s important to note here is that no study has been conducted to link a Millennial employee’s upbringing to their reaction to receiving negative feedback, making the research speculative.

Millennials as trophy kids

“Trophy Kids,” the nickname commonly used to refer to Millennials, stems from being “the pride and joy of their parents” who always praised them and overprotected them (Alsop, 2008). This praise included receiving trophies for good grades and compliments for doing chores and meeting expectations. In the workplace, the nickname refers to Millennials’ attitude, sense of

entitlement for promotions and higher pay, and, more importantly, their need for constant positive feedback.

Constructive criticism is hard for some because, as children, they got so much positive feedback. So now, when we do the performance evaluation, managers have changed their approach a bit. It's still important to give the good, the bad, and the ugly, but with a more positive emphasis. (Alsop, 2008, p.107)

Not used to negative feedback, Millennials are more likely to take constructive criticism to heart when compared to those from other generations. As Alsop (2008) noted, some have cried after receiving a negative performance review or have quit their jobs, making it difficult for managers to coach them with their careers since performance management aims to have these tough conversations and evaluate their performance. Further, crying does not suggest that all Millennial employees were overprotected by their parents to the point where they are too sensitive to receive a negative performance review. While Alsop could make valid points, it comes from the manager's perspective and not the employee's, which means some details are omitted from these accounts. Additional research would need to be conducted to see what the feedback was, the tone used by the manager when giving the feedback, and why the employee started to cry.

Millennials as narcissists

Along with labeling Millennials as “trophy kids,” the research also argues that some Millennials cannot receive negative feedback due to them being narcissists – they are labeled as more narcissistic than other generations. Narcissism has been defined as focusing on the self, being vain, arrogant, or self-absorbed (Giambatista, Hoover, and Tribble, 2017). Still, for Millennials, narcissism stems from the idea of receiving too much praise as kids. “Narcissistic millennials have been referred to as the “most-praised” generation and the “Me, Me, Me”

generation, with research indicating that they feel an entitlement to continuous praise and recognition” (Beal, 2016, p. 28).

This vanity manifests in some Millennials not wanting to hear negative feedback even when there is room for improved work performance. In fact, “The communication terrain is tricky when it comes to dealing with narcissistic millennials. For example, a communication about the “need for improvement” can be processed by the hypersensitive narcissistic receiver as (a) unable to be heard and processed, (b) irrelevant (i.e., “fake news”), or (c) processed as a personal attack” (Giambatista, Hoover, and Tribble, 2017, p. 189). When managers give Millennials constructive criticism, they risk hurting their feelings or them brushing it off. Instead, Giambatista, Hoover, and Tribble (2017) suggest,

When presenting negative feedback in this setting, the ideal scenario is to have the narcissistic individual generate the need-for-improvement data themselves. (Note: When they do this, they should be praised for their insight.). If that is not possible, then the negative information should be derived from as many sources as possible, with a preference to sources that are external and seen as impartial. If required, then face-to-face interaction may be necessary. However, the success rate of constructively and successfully communicating negative feedback to a narcissist may be low. (p. 189)

Alsop’s (2008) suggestion of Millennials as narcissists stems from a survey of 18-28 years old conducted by the Michigan State University’s Collegiate Employment Research Institute and the online careers site Monster Trak. They found that half of their respondents had moderate to high superiority beliefs about themselves. But just because Millennials have high egos doesn’t mean that they can’t hear negative feedback. Like this “trophy kid” notion, the labeling of Millennials as narcissists is a layered concept and not applicable to all within the

Millennial generation. While some Millennials like being praised, the reality is that most humans do, which means this stigma can't solely be attached to the Millennial generation. And despite the attempts to link their upbringing to narcissism and, better yet, negative feedback, all these researchers have failed to survey Millennials about their feelings and experiences receiving negative feedback from their managers.

How to Give Negative Feedback to Millennials

Even though Millennials struggle to hear any criticism, negative feedback can be beneficial for them, significantly helping them develop and achieve their career goals. As you might recall, Millennials want feedback on career growth, so negative feedback could be beneficial in giving them clarity about their career path. Existing research does provide some clues about how to provide Millennials with feedback. Managers need to articulate expectations; they can't sound "preachy" or as if they are lecturing; they must give continual feedback; and they must avoid using "why" questions which can lead to Millennials getting defensive (Anderson, A.A. Buchko, and K.J Buchko, 2016). The key to providing Millennials with feedback is understanding that they are more sensitive – or so the literature suggests – and more likely to leave their job, unlike other generations. By being sensitive and cautious in how negative feedback is delivered, managers can help Millennials increase their job performance and retain them.

Further, Alsop (2008) suggests handling the "trophy kids" with care and padding negative feedback with compliments and recognition. Alsop's suggestion contrasts with what Hall (2016) has said about feedback needing to be direct, honest, and hold no hidden agendas. Without consistent guidelines for how feedback is delivered, there will be conflicting results, further showing gaps in the literature. And for the narcissistic Millennials, they are more likely to

accept the negative feedback if “they perceive to be instrumental in providing them with greater leisure time and life/work balance. For example: “The way you are handling your work team means you have to spend more time here at the office reviewing their work. Perhaps we might consider some alternative methods”?” (Beal, 2016, p.28). Again, few studies have been conducted in which researchers have questioned Millennials about their experience receiving negative feedback and how they would like to receive negative feedback in the future.

Millennials as Supervisors

With the oldest Millennials around 41 years old and with some having over 20 years of work experience, it’s inevitable that some Millennials are supervisors. As managers, they are highly collaborative, team-oriented, and driven by purpose. Also, Millennial managers are prone to providing their employees with ongoing feedback, including weekly and biweekly meetings (Gabriellova and Buchko, 2021). This desire to offer their employees constant feedback stems from their experience as employees who craved frequent positive feedback from their supervisors. As digital natives, Millennial employees can provide feedback to their employees – like younger Generation Z employees – through digital means like instant messaging, text, or internal social networking platforms (Lulla, 2019). However, Millennial supervisors are still encountering challenges like those before them, including giving negative feedback to older and younger employees (Perna, 2020). While there is some indication about Millennials as managers, there is a lack of studies about how they manage their employees and approaches to giving negative feedback. Future research is still needed to understand how Millennials approach performance reviews, coaching, and negative feedback.

Conclusion

The literature seems clear. Millennials are selfish trophy kids who ask for feedback yet cannot handle criticism. Studies have shown that feedback is beneficial to understanding job responsibilities and career growth. And Perna (2020) highlights managers' hesitancy to give Millennials feedback out of fear of hurting them, despite wanting to help. But something is missing. While the literature claims that Millennials cannot handle negative feedback or that Millennial supervisors are hesitant to provide their employees with negative feedback, limited studies have proven whether this is the case. This paper will investigate Millennial employees and supervisors' experience of receiving and giving negative feedback, how these experiences made them feel, and their subsequent actions. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: What is the nature of critical incidents of negative feedback that Millennial employees self-report?

RQ2: What is the nature of critical incidents of negative feedback that Millennial supervisors self-report providing to employees, regardless of generation?

Methodology

This research design for this study utilized a qualitative survey to understand the nature of critical incidents of negative feedback Millennial employees and supervisors self-report receiving and providing. The critical incident technique is a research method that relies on human subjects' memory, stories, and experiences (Hughes, 2008). With the critical incident technique, survey participants are asked 'How,' 'What,' and 'Why' questions to obtain their reflective responses.

Survey development began with an extensive literature review of the current theories surrounding Millennials' desire for constant feedback, their incapability to receive negative feedback, and why managers should not give them negative feedback. A Qualtrics-based survey was then created to ask Millennials about their experiences receiving and providing negative feedback. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, and recruitment was conducted through LinkedIn, Facebook, email, and text. Opened during a six-week period from March 2022 to April 2022, this survey aimed to collect the critical incidents from Millennial respondents who detailed (a) their experiences with providing and receiving negative feedback, (b) indicated how these experiences made them feel, (c) their actions after receiving the negative feedback, and (d) how the negative feedback impacted their desire to do their jobs. This research study received approval from Baruch College's Institutional Review Board (IRB), and the research questions, survey distribution, and design were all conducted under the approval of the IRB.

Survey Design

The survey consisted of 31 multiple-choice and open-ended questions – the latter was used to collect details on Millennials' experiences of receiving and giving negative feedback. Two of the multiple-choice questions were consent questions. Five multiple-choice questions were screening ones. Six multiple-choice questions were demographic (two of which were also screening questions). Additionally, there were 23 core questions, including 11 open-ended and 12 multiple-choice questions (three of the multiple-choice questions were also screening questions) [see Appendix for survey]. The first consent question asked participants to consent to participate in the survey. If respondents agreed, they were prompted to answer the second consent question to store their data for future research. The demographic, screening, and core questions followed. Four of the six demographic questions were placed at the beginning of the

survey and two at the end. Two of the screening questions were placed at the beginning of the survey, ensuring that the respondents met the eligibility requirements – these questions asked about the respondent’s birth year and employment status. The remaining three screening questions asked whether they have received negative feedback within the past five years, if they have been a supervisor within the past five years, and what generation the employee they have identified giving feedback to identifies as. See below for the screening questions and skip logic.

Screening questions:

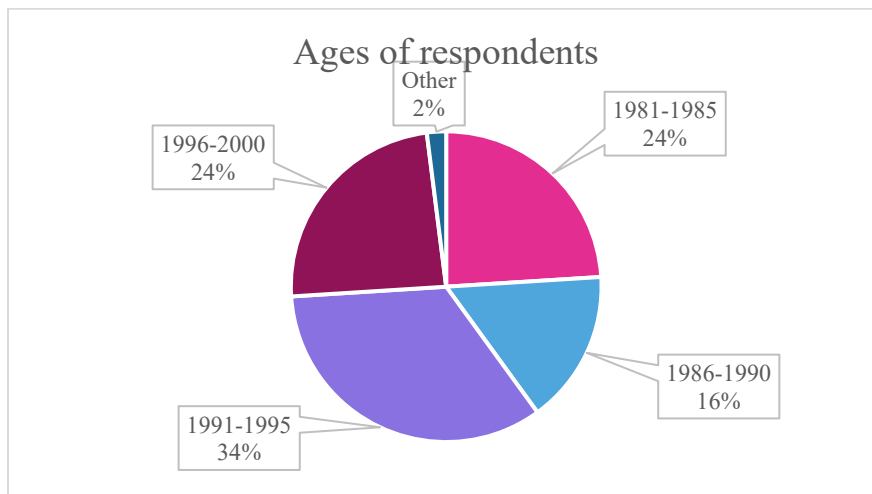
- **Question 2:** *Please select the range that best describes the year you were born – for any responses outside of the 1981-2000 range, respondents were taken to the end of their survey and thanked for their time.*
- **Question 3:** *What is your current employment status? – for any response other than ‘full-time (35+ hours a week across all paid jobs), respondents were taken to the end of their survey and thanked for their time.*
- **Question 6:** *Have you received negative feedback on your work performance within the past five years? (Negative feedback at work includes criticism about your behavior, work performance, interaction with team members, attendance, and tardiness, etc.) – respondents who answered ‘no’ or ‘don’t recall’ were skipped to question 18: Have you been in a supervisory role within the past five years? – for respondents who answered ‘no,’ they were skipped to question 27, which asked about their gender (but only if they had answered ‘yes’ to question 6). If they answered ‘no’ or ‘don’t recall’ to question 6, they were taken to the end of the survey and thanked for their time.*
- **Question 25:** *To your knowledge, which of the following generation do you think this employee you referenced identifies as? – if the respondent answered anything but*

‘Millennials (born 1981-2000), they were skipped to question 27, which asked them to select the gender they identify with.

Participants

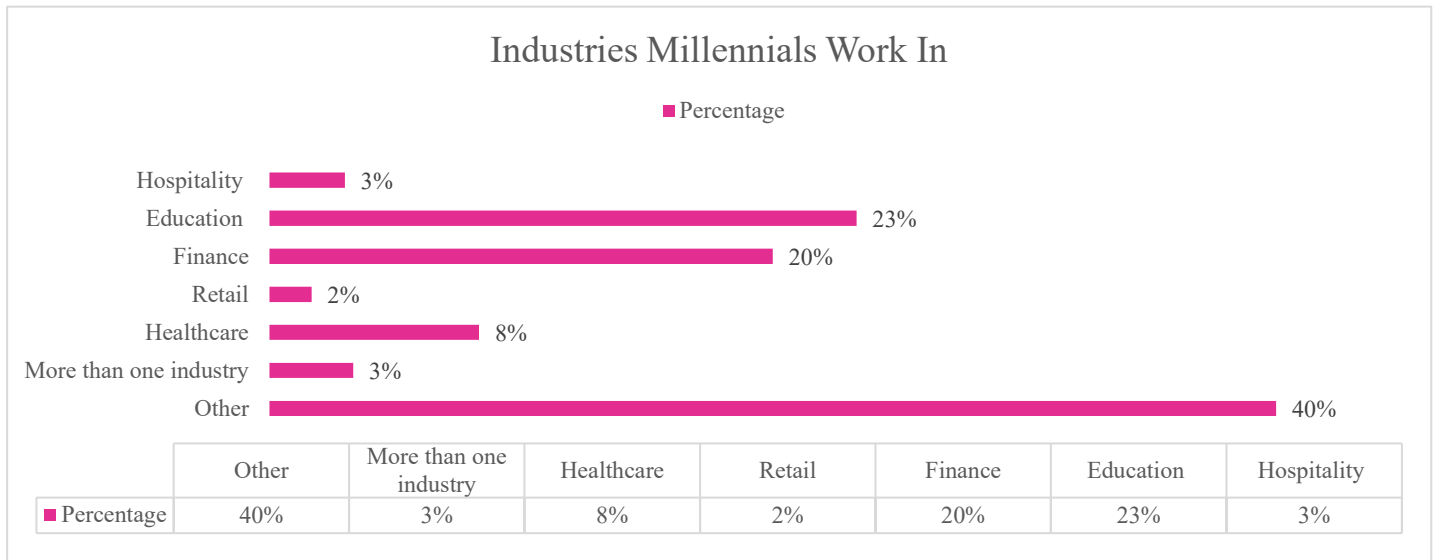
A total of 70 people responded to the survey. Three respondents didn’t identify as Millennials and full-time employees, another requirement for this research study because most adults work full-time. Full-time employees typically spend long hours and might have more job responsibilities at their workplace, potentially having received negative feedback. An additional six respondents identified as Millennials but were not full-time employees. Only 61 respondents identified as both Millennials and full-time employees. Specifically, 24% of survey participants were born between 1981-1985, 16% between 1986-1990, 34% were born between 1991-1995, another 24% were born between 1996-2000, and 2% selected ‘other,’ indicating that they weren’t a Millennial. See Figure 1 below for the breakdown. These numbers suggest that most Millennials who responded to this survey were between 31 and 27 years old. Looking at the employment status of these Millennials, 94% answered that they worked full-time.

Figure 1: Ages of all the Millennials who responded to the survey



In terms of industry, 3% work in Hospitality, 23% work in Education, 20% in Finance, 2% work in Retail (such as a clothing store), 8% work in Healthcare, 3% work in more than one industry, and most respondents – 40% – responded to ‘Other,’ indicating that the industry they work for was not listed as an option. To see the breakdown of the industry Millennials work for, see Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Industries Millennials responded to work for



Lastly, most Millennials – 26 participants or 43% – responded that they have been in their current position for two to three years. Thirty percent (18 respondents) have been in their current role for one year. An additional seven respondents (12%) have been in their current position for four to five years, three respondents (5%) for seven to eight years, and 10% (six survey participants) for nine or more years.

Data analysis

The responses collected from the open-ended questions were analyzed and coded for the common themes. Coding is the process of categorizing data collected (Allen, 2017). Various coding methods include discourse analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis, and narrative

analysis. For this research paper, the coding method used was thematic analysis, which looks at recurring topics, patterns, or themes in messages (Allen, 2017). The critical incidents collected from Millennial employees and supervisors were coded for three more significant categories: the nature of the feedback, the channels used, and their response. The critical incidents were then further categorized for sub-themes.

Findings

Millennial Employees and Critical Incidents of Negative Feedback

***RQ1:** What is the nature of critical incidents of negative feedback that Millennial employees self-report?*

Of the 61 respondents who self-identified as full-time Millennial employees, only 32 reported receiving negative feedback in the workplace within the past five years, and 24 respondents said they had not received negative feedback in the past five years. The remaining five respondents did not recall receiving negative feedback in the past five years. In addition to describing their experiences, respondents were asked who provided them with the negative feedback. The majority of survey participants responded that they were given feedback by their supervisors (86%). The remaining respondents reported 5% from a colleague and 10% from a different source.

Going back to the 32 respondents who stated they had received negative feedback in the past five years, only 21 provided a critical incident detailing their experience receiving negative feedback in the workplace. To analyze these critical incidents of negative feedback, I coded them into three overarching categories: (1) the nature of the critical incidents, (2) the channels used, and lastly, (3) the response to the negative feedback.

Nature of Negative Feedback

The content of the feedback can define the nature of the critical incidents. For this research study, the nature of the negative feedback was coded into five categories: (a) needs work improvement, (b) the threat to job security, (c) retaliatory, (d) change attitude, and (e) take initiative.

Needs work improvement. Nine of the 21 overall critical incidents from Millennial employees showed that the nature of the feedback suggested that they needed to improve their work. For some respondents, negative feedback resulted from a project they had worked on where their supervisors did not like their work. For others, the negative feedback resulted from slacking in job responsibilities or a lack of productivity. A few examples of these critical incidents (shortened to CI) seen in Figure 3 are as follows:

Figure 3: Examples of Millennial employee’s critical incidents of negative feedback suggesting a need for work improvement

Needs work improvement	
CI 1	“When I first started at this job as an admin for the healthcare consulting team, I was under the impression that I would be supporting the partners in a standard admin capacity as well as the consulting team with ad hoc requests. The ops manager relied heavily on me, and I was unaware that I should be prioritizing the manager's requests. I was not made aware of my role being her support until a few months in. Specific language was dropping the ball, forgetting, not completing tasks, not communicating. I said I would improve and tried to get off the call quickly.”
CI 2	“There was a time when my manager called me into his office because I signed out the teller cash box without realizing that the teller never signed her box out. We got an audit exception for this because it is a dual control situation. By her not signing it didn't follow the dual control protocol. He told me that because this is an audit exception it put us at risk of failing the audit and he told me that I had to be more careful.”
CI 3	“I had meetings with my editor on each team after submitting my first draft. They tore up the paper with edits in a Google doc and walked me through an explanation of each error. Then they showed me how to fix it for next time. In general feedback was provided via comments in Google docs and if there were any trends of error identified they would be cited as such and would be reported during a 1:1 check-in. Sometimes reminders of deadlines or overarching changes to be made would be notified via slack messaging.”

CI 4	<p>“A few months into a new position, I was tasked with creating a video for a social media campaign to promote reducing consumption. Video production and editing were not my core skills, but I did my best to create a video, which was poorly developed and executed. In other words, my video sucked because I didn't know how to film correctly on a phone. I was told by two people, new peers, that video editing was difficult, and my plans were not of value. I was not provided any assistance. After the video was posted, my boss's boss - promptly came up to me and yelled at me about how horrible my work was.”</p>
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Threat to job security. Another category that arose in Millennial employees' critical incidents was this overall threat to their job security from the negative feedback they had received. With four critical incidents suggesting the lack of job security, Millennials recounted times when their managers had not only highlighted the struggles they were facing with job responsibilities but, in the process, threatened their future in their role. One example came from a respondent who recalled:

“Having difficulty with a project – there wasn't enough information to write a complete story – and told my manager about the roadblock I hit. She then proceeded to (very loudly in front of everyone else in the department) tell me that I better do my job because I could be replaced in a heartbeat.”

Another example comes from a respondent who identified as a registered nurse:

“I work as a registered nurse at a private clinic. A few weeks ago, the doctor I worked for told me that he received a complaint about the way I took a patient's blood pressure. He called me into his office in the middle of my shift and started to yell at me while his office door was open so all the patients could hear him. He told me I was being irresponsible and that if ‘I didn't get my act together, he would fire me and have my nursing license taken away.’”

Retaliatory. In this third category, only two respondents recalled receiving negative feedback retaliatory in nature. This idea of being retaliatory can be defined as one where the

feedback provided is being used as a disciplinary tactic or as payback for something previously done. One respondent recalled an incident where they had previously offered a junior team member negative feedback about a report's poor quality. During this respondent's annual review, their "manager then included that negative feedback as part of my annual review. I immediately recognized the feedback given the recency of it and knew exactly who wrote it. I communicated that that was one moment in time and that it was recent, but not indicative of my performance for the past year."

Change attitude. Three of the 21 respondents implied that the negative feedback suggested that they needed to adjust or change their attitude. One respondent recalled a time when during a meeting, "I responded a bit curtly to a question, and my supervisor came to talk to me afterward about my demeanor." Another recounted a time when a colleague told them that they were ranting. A snippet of the critical incident is as follows:

"I was on a casual call with a colleague I am friendly with. During the call we spent time "ranting" or complaining about difficulties with stakeholders. I complained about a superior stakeholder and my colleague decided to back up the stakeholder and told me I was having attitude. I was taken aback by this comment and stood firm and said, 'I don't have attitude.' The colleague proceeded to tell me again that I had an attitude."

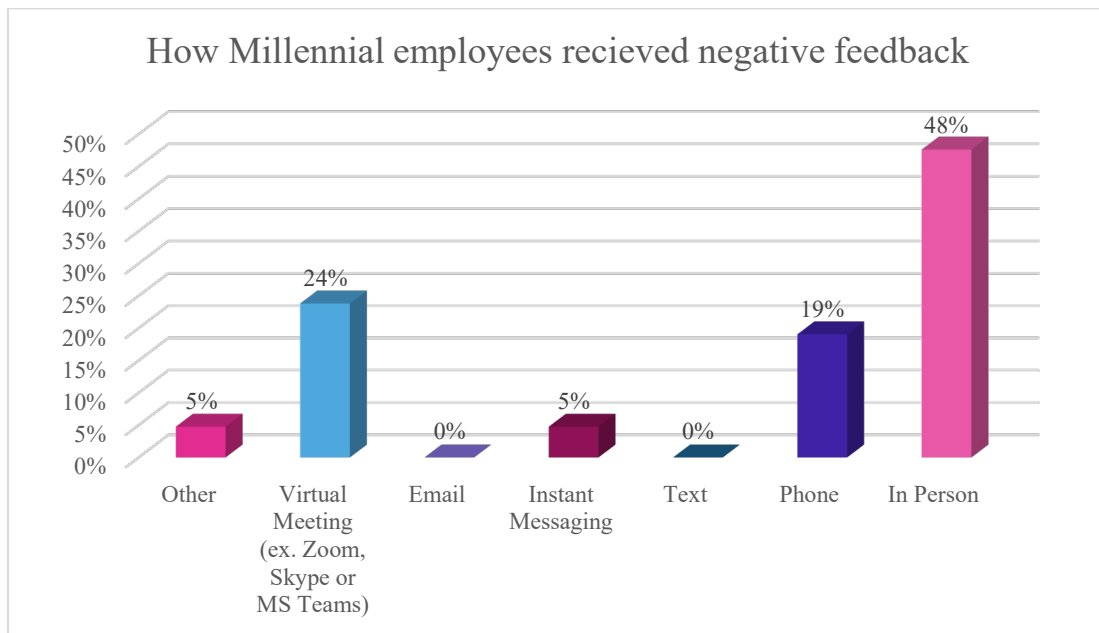
Take initiative. With this last theme, three Millennial employees recalled negative feedback. Their supervisors told them that they needed to take more initiative in their work – to step up and do things without being told or take responsibility upon themselves. One respondent recalled a phone conversation with their supervisor, who said, "sometimes I think you really gotta get it together" and "you need to take initiative." Another respondent detailed negative

feedback in which their supervisor told them that they were “asking too many questions” and needed to take the initiative to find the responses themselves.

Channels of Negative Feedback

The channel of negative feedback is how Millennial employees receive the negative feedback. Such methods include in-person (face-to-face), over the phone, via text, instant messaging, email, virtual meetings (Zoom, Skype, MS Teams, etc.), or other methods. By looking at Figure 4, it’s clear that most Millennials received the negative feedback in person, with 48% of respondents citing this as the method they received it. The breakdown of the other methods is as follows: 19% by phone, 0% by text, 5% by instant messaging, 0% by email, 24% through a virtual meeting, and 5% through other methods.

Figure 4: Graph depicting the channels in which Millennials received negative feedback



Response to Negative Feedback

Actions Taken. When asked what actions Millennial employees recalled taking in response to the negative feedback they received, there were three emerging themes: (1) go on the

defensive, (2) apologize, and (3) implement the feedback. Figures 5-7 below show the actions Millennial employees recall taking. Each respondent has been assigned a number to identify their response.

On the defense:

Figure 5: Examples of critical incidents where respondents tried to defend themselves

Actions taken	
Respondent 1	“I tried to defend myself, but the doctor was not listening. I haven’t quit just yet, but I am in the process of looking for another job.”
Respondent 2	“I corrected her immediately and told her that I wasn’t using the job and reminded her about all the things I had accomplished.”

Apologizing:

Figure 6: Examples of critical incidents where respondents apologized for their actions

Actions taken	
Respondent 3	“I apologized and said that it wouldn't happen again. Going forward I made sure to triple check everything because I didn't want to experience something like this again.”
Respondent 4	“I told the team I would not be doing video production and asked the team to hire videographers. I apologized to him and owned up to my own mistakes. He was shocked. I reduced my in-person conversations with him as much as I could.”

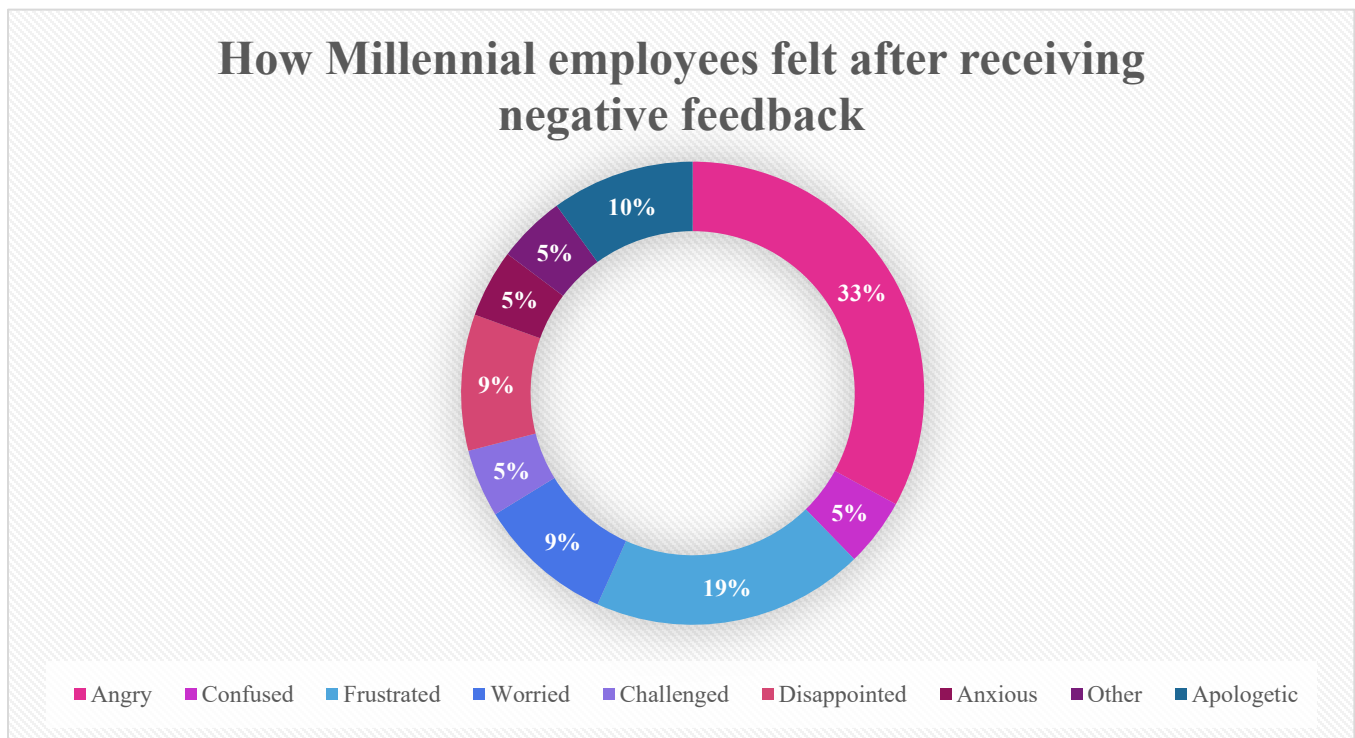
Implementing the feedback

Figure 7: Examples of critical incidents highlighting respondents who applied the feedback to their work

Actions taken	
Respondent 5	“I immediately tried to implement the feedback in future work and would ask if they noticed the improvement or if there’s anything else I could do during my next 1:1 check-in.”
Respondent 6	“I definitely tried to not ask questions and carry an attitude of just not caring too much if something bad happened because my supervisor did not want me to ask questions. I also used the opportunity to ask my other colleagues for guidance.”

Emotional Response. Based on the survey questions that asked respondents to describe how they felt after hearing the negative feedback, most respondents cited feeling angry – 33% of respondents – indicating that they did not enjoy receiving it. An additional 19% felt angry, with 10% feeling disappointed. Figure 8 shows a complete breakdown of the emotions Millennial employees felt after receiving the negative feedback.

Figure 8: Visual outlining of how Millennial employees felt after receiving negative feedback



When asked why they selected the response to their emotion, one respondent wrote that their anger stemmed from feeling like the negative feedback was “out of line and inappropriate.” A second employee linked their anger with being “justified in asking the questions that I asked” due to the nature of their job, further feeling that the negative feedback they received was “a way for my supervisor to have less responsibility in training me.”

Advice to Provide Negative Feedback

Most Millennials agree that their supervisors should be the ones to provide them with negative feedback. Of Millennial respondents, 90% reported wanting to receive negative feedback from their supervisors; 5% would like to get negative feedback from Human Resources, with another 5% from a different source. Interestingly, in the design of the question, respondents' other option was 'Colleagues,' which received a 0% response rate. Additionally, when asked what advice they would give to those providing them with feedback, the consensus was clear: be empathetic, provide further explanations, and give feedback in real-time. Examples of the advice provided include:

Be empathetic: “To be more empathetic and compassionate. I was only a few months into my career when I received this feedback and while I understood why it was given to me, the tone was off-putting. Experiences like this can make people leave their jobs, fear their managers, or give up on their dreams.”

Provide further explanations: “If you can't support the negative feedback with multiple instances as evidence, then you shouldn't provide it at all...Supervisors should observe an employee's behavior and record notable moments for future evaluations. Then, they have specific examples and can make anecdotal conclusions about behavior for sweeping statements.”

Real-time feedback: “I'd advise my current supervisor to bring issues up before they come a bigger issue.”

Millennial Supervisors and Critical Incidents of Negative Feedback

RQ2: What is the nature of critical incidents of negative feedback that Millennial supervisors self-report providing to employees, regardless of generation?

The survey results show that of the 61 full-time Millennial employees, only 16 responded to having experience as a supervisor in the past five years – eight of these respondents were also counted as Millennial employees. Of these respondents, 57% had two to three years in their current role; 13% had four to five years in their current position; 19% had seven to eight years; an additional 13% had nine or more years, and no respondent had zero to one in their current position. Additionally, 79% of Millennial supervisors reported that the individual they identified providing feedback was a Millennial.

Nature of Negative Feedback

For Millennial supervisors, the nature of the negative feedback that they recalled providing to their employees can be boiled down into two categories: (1) the need for skills improvement and (2) a way to offer alternate solutions. Interestingly, the first code for needing to improve skills was also reported by Millennial employees as one of the types of negative feedback that they received. It is important to note that only 12 of the 16 respondents who identified as a supervisor detailed an experience providing an employee with negative feedback. Considering that most respondents were born between 1991 and 1995, the limited number of Millennial supervisors indicates that many Millennials have not been in a supervisory role yet. It can also indicate that, as Perna (2020) suggests, they are hesitant to give negative feedback.

The need for skills improvement. Of the 12 Millennial supervisors, 50% recalled providing negative feedback to highlight skills that needed to be improved. One supervisor remembered when they told an employee that “she needed to improve on her reporting skills” because she neglected to report important client information. Another described a time when an intern they were supervising failed to show up to zoom meetings or answer their emails and phone calls. When the intern finally showed up, this respondent said that they let them know

“that communication is key in the workplace, and although it was a difficult time, they are responsible for letting me know if they could continue the work or not.”

Ways to offer alternate solutions. Differing from the need to improve skills, offering alternate solutions seeks to provide employees with tangible advice and solutions to improve their skills. Six Millennial supervisors recalled their experiences providing their employees with negative feedback, sample critical incidents (labeled as CI) from these supervisors are as follows:

CI 1: “Constructive feedback with suggestions for alternative approaches (how) and an explanation of why the alternatives would lead to positive outcomes (why).”

CI2: “In the occasions when I have to train the new tellers, I have to be very patient because they always ask me the same questions over and over. They also don't follow my directions. In that moment I have to give them guidance on how they can be more productive at work and how they can follow the policy of the bank.”

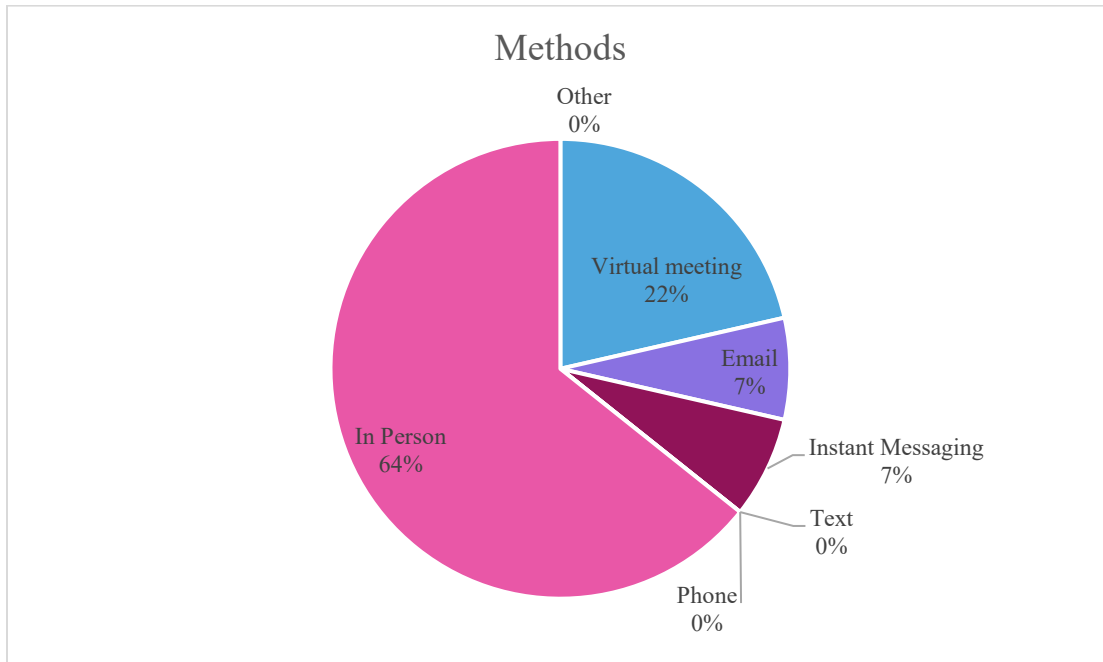
CI 3: “I was concerned about their job performance, so I held an in-person meeting with them. I told them that I had noticed that they were struggling with the work and had a low morale recently and that I had received some complaints from clients. I asked how I could help and even suggested some training that they could take to improve on their writing skills.”

Channels of Negative Feedback

When Millennial supervisors were asked how they provided the negative feedback, 64% stated that they did so in person (face-to-face). The selection of in-person mirrors that of Millennial employees who cited face-to-face conversations as the primary way they received negative feedback. Supervisors also indicated the use of instant messaging, email, and virtual

meetings through Zoom, Skype, or MS Teams as the other ways they have provided feedback to their employees. Figure 9 offers a percentage breakdown of the methods used.

Figure 9: Pie chart breaking down the methods Millennial supervisors used to deliver negative feedback

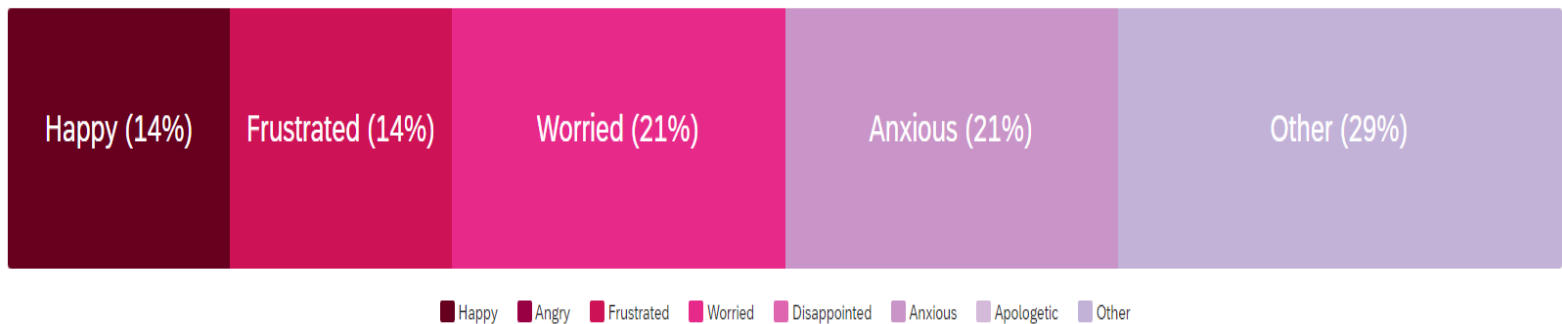


Response to Negative Feedback

Actions taken by the Millennial employees. Following the question, which asked supervisors to detail giving negative feedback, they were asked to explain the steps that employees took after hearing the feedback. Some supervisors stated that the employee took the feedback and improved. For example, one respondent said that “The person listened and tried their best in her second attempt at drafting the release. It was a little bit better!” indicating that the employee used the negative feedback to improve their work which resulted in them getting better. Other supervisors said that their employee dismissed the feedback, and for some, they had seen their employee leave the job.

Emotions felt by supervisors. While ‘other’ was the most reported emotion, 29% of respondents selected this option, the two most frequently reported emotions were ‘anxious’ and ‘worried,’ with 21% each. Supervisors also reported feeling happy, frustrated, worried, and anxious about giving the feedback – see Figure 10 below for the percentage for each emotion.

Figure 10: Screenshot of the emotion’s supervisors felt per the Qualtrics survey



Discussion

The findings from this study build on the existing literature, which suggests that Millennials are incapable of hearing negative feedback, are “trophy kids,” and exhibit narcissistic behaviors and tendencies (Beal, 2016). The results indicate that Millennial employees are willing to hear negative feedback from supervisors, primarily if delivered in person and with empathy. Regarding Millennial supervisors, the results suggest that they give negative feedback to help their employees improve their work and feel anxious delivering it. In closing, key findings, study limitations, and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Key findings

Millennial employees are open to feedback. Contrary to what Ferri-Reed (2012) states about Millennial’s not seeking out negative feedback, this research study shows that Millennials do want to hear negative feedback. In fact, 91% of Millennials indicated that they wanted to receive negative feedback from their supervisors – the need for feedback seems to be in line with

Hershatler and Epstein's (2010) research which suggests that Millennials want constant and ample feedback. Additionally, if we recall the actions Millennials reported taking after hearing the feedback, many were either apologetic or began implementing the feedback into their work. Despite 33% of Millennials reporting feeling angry with the negative feedback and 19% frustrated, all actions seemed to break from what Anderson, Buchko, and K.J. Buchko (2016) have suggested about Millennials becoming aggressive when given negative feedback – anger and frustration are not the equivalents to aggression and violent behavior. This lack of aggression further dismisses the suggestion that Millennials are narcissists, as someone who is a narcissist might not apologize for their wrongdoings.

Millennial employees want empathic and practical feedback. The literature categorizes Millennials as “trophy kids” who are sensitive because of parental overprotection and praise. Alsop (2008) has suggested managers provide these “trophy kids” with negative feedback padded with compliments. However, the survey results showed that Millennials don't want sugar-coated feedback but instead want empathy and practicality in the negative feedback they receive – none of the respondents suggested using compliments to deliver the negative feedback. It may seem that the use of empathy is the result of Millennials' sensitivity – Alsop would most certainly agree – but the reality is, it simply stems from wanting respect and understanding of their work experience level. If we recall the advice previously highlighted, one respondent asked for more empathy from their supervisor because there were “only a few months into my career when I received this feedback,” further describing the feedback they received as career and dream shattering. In terms of practicality, respondents indicated that the negative feedback that they want to receive should be grounded in evidence.

Millennial supervisors are anxious to provide negative feedback but do it to help their employees. Twenty-one percent of Millennial supervisors reported feeling anxious when delivering the negative feedback to their employees due to not knowing how the employee would react. This anxious feeling certainly falls in line with the theory from Perna (2020), who said Millennial supervisors struggle to provide feedback to younger employees. Despite this anxious feeling, these supervisors still recalled giving negative feedback because they genuinely wanted to see their employees succeed. One respondent cited feeling anxious because “I am not a person who enjoys negative feedback although I know it helps shape experiences for better outcomes. Providing it was even harder because I love supporting others...I do not want that negative feedback to hurt them. If anything, I want them to know I am coming from a place where I want them to succeed.”

Limitations

This research study had several limitations, including the sampling, clarity of the negative feedback definition, qualitative research, and survey design.

Sampling. This survey was shared on LinkedIn and Facebook and through email and text to the researcher’s personal contacts. As a result of the distribution, only 70 survey responses were received. Three of the respondents did not fit the criteria of identifying as Millennials and working full-time and six respondents identified as Millennial but not full-time employees. Out of the 61 responses from full-time Millennial respondents, 32 stated to have received negative feedback in the past five years. Of this number, only 21 shared their experience – for Millennial supervisors, there were only 12 critical incidents. Such a small sample limits the opportunity to generalize findings to a larger population. However, the data offered interesting insights into the

research topic, and the results can be used to indicate a direction to further research based on broader data.

Clarity of negative feedback definition. For this research study, negative feedback was defined as constructive criticism highlighting what an employee is doing wrong in their job or workplace. Despite this definition, 40% of survey takers responded to not having received negative feedback, with an additional 7% saying that they don't recall receiving negative feedback. These stats are based on the larger 61 respondents who identified as a Millennial and full-time employees. With 47% of respondents saying they haven't or don't recall receiving negative feedback, they perhaps did not understand the definition of negative feedback. Additionally, this research study could have used wording like 'constructive feedback' to garner more examples to define negative feedback. Further, questions and examples about positive feedback could have been asked to highlight the differences and help participants understand what type of feedback is considered negative.

Qualitative research. While great for collecting qualitative information, using critical incidents as the research method has disadvantages. The main disadvantage stems from relying on people's memory, leading to inaccuracy. Also, it depends on the individual's perception, which can potentially lead to bias.

Survey design. The survey used for this study was based on open-ended questions that were worded in longer, more descriptive language. Given that 32 respondents indicated that they had received negative feedback in the past five years and only 21 shared their experience, the survey design and questions may have been too long. The question that asked about their experience getting negative feedback had a 98-word count; the question about supervisor's experience had a 102-word count, with the other descriptive open-ended questions ranging

around 60 words each. Additionally, ten open-ended questions required participants to describe in detail their experience. For some, the need to provide details and read lengthier questions deterred them from finishing the survey. This idea is supported by Bronsnan, Babkhani, and Dolnicar's (2019) suggestion that survey respondents only spend 32% of their time reading the instructions, questions, and answers.

Recommendation for future research

Job level. This survey asked for respondents to work full-time, defined as 35 or more hours a week across all their jobs. Anyone who attempted to take the survey that did not fall under this category could not share their critical incidents. Future researchers can expand this pool slightly, allowing Millennials who work part-time (fewer than 35 hours across all jobs) to share their experiences with negative feedback. In doing this, they might be able to gather more data and collect responses from younger generations of Millennials. The latter is more likely not to have extensive experience as full-time employees.

Quantitative research. While this research study used a qualitative approach, a quantitative method can gather more generalizable data on the type of negative feedback Millennials receive and give. It would be interesting to see if the experiences differ from the qualitative findings of this study. The results of this study could be used to provide the basis for scaled items on issues, content, response, and emotion.

Different qualitative research methods. An open-ended survey was conducted for this research study focusing on collecting critical incidents of negative feedback. However, interviewing Millennials can help ask them follow-up questions to fill in any gaps in their experiences – a survey cannot do so.

Generation Z. The idea of negative feedback doesn't have to stop at Millennials. As the rising generation in the workforce, Gen Z comes with another set of perspectives, values, and opinions about what working and management should look like. Extending the research to include them could (1) explain similarities between the two generations when it comes to negative feedback, (2) highlight feedback differences, and (3) provide managers with guidelines on how to give negative feedback to both generations.

CONCLUSION

The research aimed to identify the nature of the negative feedback Millennial employees recalled receiving and giving for Millennial supervisors. Based on a qualitative analysis of the critical incidents, it can be concluded that Millennial employees are open to negative feedback, apologetic when they receive it, and take what they have been told and apply it to improve their work performance. For Millennial supervisors, the results show that while they feel anxious when delivering the feedback, they do so to help their employees.

While sampling, definition, and survey design limitations exist, this approach provides new insights into Millennials' first-hand experience with negative feedback. Future studies will need to be conducted to include Millennial employees who identify as part-time employees and expand to include Generation Z to better understand the implications of these results.

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Appendix

Survey Questions

The consent form – including the two signature of participants questions below - will be placed before the survey questions (if ‘disagree’ is selected for the first question, the respondent will be taken to the end of the survey)

1. If you agree to participate in this research study, please indicate by checking agree. You can print a copy of this consent form to keep.

I agree
 I do not agree

2. If you would permit the researchers to store your de-identified survey data for future research, please indicate by checking agree below.

I agree to allow my de-identified survey data to be stored for future research by the researchers of this study.

I do not agree to allow my de-identified survey data to be stored for future research by the researchers of this study.

3. Please select the range that best describes the year you were born

- a. 1981 – 1985
- b. 1986 – 1990
- c. 1991 – 1995
- d. 1996 – 2000
- e. Other

4. What is your current employment status? (*Screening question - survey ends if any option but full-time is selected*)

- a. Full-time (35+ hours a week across all paid jobs)
- b. Part-time (less than 35 hours a week across all paid jobs)
- c. Self-employed (independent employee with no supervisor)
- d. Unemployed (not currently employed)
- e. Retired (formerly employed and not currently working)
- f. Other (ex. Seasonal worker, volunteer, etc.)

5. What industry do you work in?

- a. Hospitality
- b. Education
- c. Finance
- d. Retail
- e. Transportation
- f. Healthcare
- g. More than one industry
- h. Other

6. How long have you been in your current position?
 - a. 0-1 years
 - b. 2-3 years
 - c. 4-5 years
 - d. 7-8 years
 - e. 9 or more years

7. Have you received negative feedback on your work performance within the past five years? (Negative feedback at work includes criticism about your behavior, work performance, interaction with team members, attendance, and tardiness, etc.) *(yes – skip to millennials and negative feedback questions; no – skip to supervisor questions; don't recall – skip to supervisor question)*
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't recall

8. Take a minute to think about your work experience. Now tell me a story about a time when you received negative feedback about your performance at work within the past five years? (Explain the experience in as much detail as possible, including (a) the circumstances that led to the feedback, (b) the nature of the feedback and, when possible, the specific language that was used to deliver the feedback, and (c) what did you say (if anything) in direct response to the feedback either verbally at that moment or in written form via text, email, social media, etc.)

9. Who gave you the negative feedback?
 - a. Supervisor
 - b. Colleague
 - c. Human Resources
 - d. Other

10. How did you receive the negative feedback?
 - a. In Person
 - b. Phone
 - c. Text
 - d. Instant Messaging
 - e. Email
 - f. Virtual Meeting (ex. Zoom, Skype, or MS Teams)
 - g. Other

11. To the extent that you recall, what actions did you take, if any, in response to the feedback? (Explain your actions in as much detail as possible, including (a) whether you had a follow-up conversation with the person who gave you the feedback, (b) if you quit your job, or (c) if you used the feedback to change your performance in the workplace).

12. Which emotion(s) best describes how you felt after hearing the negative feedback? (Select all that apply)

- a. Happy
 - b. Angry
 - c. Confused
 - d. Frustrated
 - e. Worried
 - f. Disappointed
 - g. Anxious
 - h. Apologetic
 - i. Challenged
 - j. Disengaged
 - k. Other
13. Please explain why you selected the emotion(s) for the questions above?
14. What was it about the negative feedback that made it effective or ineffective for you?
15. How would you like to receive negative feedback in the workplace in the future?
- a. In Person
 - b. Phone
 - c. Text
 - d. Instant Messaging
 - e. Email
 - f. Virtual Meeting (ex. Zoom, Skype, or MS Teams)
 - g. Other
16. Who do you think should provide you with negative feedback in the workplace?
- a. Supervisor
 - b. Colleague
 - c. Human Resources
 - d. Other
17. Please explain your response to the previous question regarding who should provide negative feedback. Why is this your preferred source of negative feedback?
18. How frequently would you like to receive negative feedback in the workplace?
- a. Daily
 - b. Two times a week
 - c. Weekly
 - d. Biweekly
 - e. Monthly
 - f. Annually
 - g. Never
 - h. Other
19. Thinking about your experience, what advice would you give your current or past supervisor about giving negative feedback? (Please explain why you would share this advice)
20. Have you been in a supervisory role within the past five years? (***Yes- skip to supervisor and negative feedback questions; no – skip to the end of the survey***)

- a. Yes
 - b. No
21. How long have you been supervising others?
- a. 0-1 years
 - b. 2-3 years
 - c. 4-5 years
 - d. 7-8 years
 - e. 9 or more years
22. Take a minute to think about your current or past role as a supervisor. Now tell me a story about a time when you had to provide someone with negative feedback within the past five years? (Explain the experience in as much detail as possible, including (a) the circumstances that led to the feedback, (b) the nature of the feedback and when possible, the specific language you used to deliver the feedback, and (c) what did the employee say (if anything) in direct response to the feedback either verbally at that moment or in written form via text, email, social media, etc.)
23. How did you provide the negative feedback?
- a. In Person
 - b. Phone
 - c. Text
 - d. Instant Messaging
 - e. Email
 - f. Virtual Meeting (ex. Zoom, Skype, or MS Teams)
 - g. Other
24. To the extent that you remember, what actions did the employee take, if any, in response to the negative feedback? (Explain their actions in as much detail as possible, including (a) whether you had a follow-up conversation with the person who gave you the feedback, (b) if you quit your job, or (c) if you used the feedback to change your performance in the workplace).
25. Which emotion(s) best describes how you felt providing the negative feedback? (Select all that apply)
- a. Happy
 - b. Angry
 - c. Frustrated
 - d. Worried
 - e. Disappointed
 - f. Anxious
 - g. Apologetic
 - h. Other
26. Please explain why you selected the emotion(s) for the questions above?
27. What did you learn from this experience? (Explain in as much detail as possible, including (a) why you thought your feedback was helpful or unhelpful for the employee, and (b) how this experience shape how you would provide future negative feedback to this employee and other employees).
28. To your knowledge, which of the following generation do you think this employee you referenced identifies as? (*If an option other than Millennial is selected, skip to the gender and ethnicity demographic questions*)
- a. Baby Boomers (born 1946- 1964)

- b. Generation X (born 1965-1980)
 - c. Millennials (born 1981 -2000)
 - d. Generation Z (born 2001 – 2020)
 - e. Other
29. What advice would you have for Millennial employees about receiving negative feedback? (Please explain why you would give them this advice)
30. What gender do you identify with?
- a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Prefer not to answer
31. What is your ethnicity?
- a. White
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - d. Asian
 - e. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - f. Latino or Hispanic
 - g. Other