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## MILLENNIALS AND MENTAL HEALTH

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**Abstract-** Millennials constitute the demographic dividend of the country. They are undergoing through several challenges due to the socio economic condition of the country. Lack of jobs, intense competition, social media pressure, poor lifestyle, changed family pattern are all contributing to the poor mental health. As compared to previous generations this is the first generation that is choosing their romantic partner, ordering their food and clothes online. They are the first ones who are breaking the stereotypes of traditional professions. All this change is causing psychopathology in millennials, therefore its important to understand the mental health of millennials.

A generation is a group which can be identified by the year of birth, age, location and significant events that create their personality (Guha 2010). Each generation has a set of different values, norms, beliefs and ideas. When the ideas and lifestyle alterations from one generation to another, a generation gap arises.

Generation gap simply can be described as a phenomenon “When a person wants his son to be like him but he doesn’t want to be like his father”. Generation gap is basically the difference in opinions between one generation and the other generation. However, it is extremely important to understand the difference between generations especially in an Indian setting where the family system is still largely joint and several generations cohabit with each other. Not only in the family settings, several generations also co work with each other in workspace.

But the question which arises in our minds is that what are several generations. Each generation has been referred by a name. Let’s find out the generations. The term “Lost Generation” became associated with a group of writers and artists with whom Hemingway worked in Paris, France, during the early 1920s. However, the term also refers more broadly to all those who reached adulthood during World War I. In Europe, they have also been called “the generation of 1914.” People born in between 1901-1927 are called as people belonging to “The Greatest Generation”. They are called greatest because they grew up during the Great Depression and fought in World War II, or their labor helped win it. People who were born in between 1928 and 1945 are referred as the silent generation. People born between 1946 and 1964 are called baby boomers because of the skyrocketing birth rates following World War II. It is estimated that, on average, approximately 4.2 million babies were born each year in the United States between the years of 1946 and 1964. People living in post-war suburbia and resurfacing from the Great Depression saw a booming society, in both children and the economy.

Generation X comprises of people born between 1965 and 1980. The X was used to give the idea that the generation resisted being defined, with reference to the variable “x” rather than some other characteristic. Generation X—or Gen X for short—was also known as the Baby Busters, the Latchkey Generation, and Post-Boomers. Gen X is also sometimes referred to as the “latchkey generation” as they were often left unsupervised at home after school until their parents came home from work. 4 People sometimes refer to Gen X as the “**New Lost Generation**”. Back in their early days, they were considered lost because of the shifting societal values at the time.

Millennials are people born in between 1981 and 2010. They are also referred as generation Y. Members of this demographic cohort are known as **millennials** because the oldest became adults around the turn of the

millennium. Authors William Strauss and Neil Howe, known for creating the Strauss–Howe generational theory, are widely credited with naming the **millennials**. People born in between 1996 and 2010 are called Generation Y because of the fact that it is the second generation after generation X. Generation y also is referred by other names like I generation, Net gen, Centennials and post millennials. People born in between 2011 and 2025 are called generation alpha, named after the first letter in the Greek alphabet, Generation alpha is the first to be born entirely in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Generation alpha comprises of children of millennials. Generation Beta will be children born between 2025 and 2039. Generation Delta will follow generation beta.

- The lost Generation (1901–1927)
- The Greatest Generation (1901-1927)
- The Silent Generation (born 1928–1945)
- Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964)
- Generation X (born 1965–1980)
- Millennials (born 1981–1995)
- Generation Z (born 1996–2010)
- Generation Alpha (born 2011–2025)
- Generation Beta (2025-2039)
- Generation Delta (2039- later)

Millennials make up the country's demographic dividend. The generation known as millennials makes up the young of the country. Therefore, the mental health conditions of what would otherwise be a really "positive and resilient generation" have been significantly impacted while attempting to handle their personal and professional life in the recent wave of pandemic and low economy. Millennials, often known as Generation Y, are people who were born between the 1980s and the mid-1990s. According to Oxford Living Dictionaries, millennials are those who are becoming adults at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The millennial generation is the one that came after generation X (those born in the 1960s and 1970s) and before generation Y. **(Kaifi et al, 2012).**

Millennials is a generation born between the early 1980s and the mid-to-late 1990s (Mangold& Smith,2012). Millennials is the generation which is forming the youth of today. It is the generation with the steering wheel of today's socio, economic and political development. What makes this generation distinctive is that it has witnessed phenomenon which has changed the rules, practices of today, thereby marking a stark contrast from the previous generation of baby boomers also called the generation X. This is the first generation which has high literacy rates, elevated usage of internet, social media which marks its distinction from the parent generation. First generation to grow up with the internet also gives them the epithet of generation of digital natives. The name millennials came from the fact that the oldest millennial entered adulthood around the end of the third millennium. William Strauss and Neil Howe are credited for creating the word Millennials in 1987. It is the generation suffering from economic recessions, change in societal norms, relationship patterns. This generation shows personality characteristics different from the preceding generation called generation X and succeeding generation called generation Y. Millennials have changed their goals, desires, beliefs, regarding the romantic relationships and as a result we are witnessing new practices of late marriages, low marriage rates, love marriages, high divorce rates, multiple marriages, live in relationships and childless marriages. Although millennials are often acknowledged as a generation that owes more money than it has, Indian millennials are happier than their parents and claim that they are living a better life than the previous generation. Cognitive neuroscience claims that younger people have higher Emotional intelligence than the previous generation. There has been a resurgence of emotional intelligence in this generation due to more exposure of information, globalization, internet boom, advent of social networking, advent of dating apps, trending of practices like mindfulness, meditation, yoga among millennials. Millennials in India are the connecting link 2 between the age which was not familiar to technology, globalization, and a generation Z which has been connected to technology and fast paced life since birth. Therefore, maybe this is the reason millennials are found to be the most civic minded people who are trying unique ways to make the world a better place to live in. Millennials are confident and that

confidence comes from trust and optimism(Guha,2010). Research shows that millennials rank higher in self-esteem and assertiveness when compared to previous generation at that same age (Deal, Altman & Rogelberg, 2010).

### WHO QUALIFIES AS MILLENNIAL???

Millennials in varied studies are broadly considered from people born between 1981 to 2000.. William Strauss and Neil Howe known for creating Strauss- Howe Generational theory are credited for creating the word —Millennials. Psychologist Jean Twenge described millennials as “Generation Me”. American sociologist Kathleen Shaputis labelled millennials as the Boomerang Generation or the Peter Pan Generation because of the millennials perceived tendency to delay adulthood rites for longer period than the previous generation.

Millennials as a word and generation is recognized by American Psychological Association, institutes such as Pew research centre, Brookings's institutions, World Economic Forum, US Chamber of Commerce foundation. It is the generation suffering from economic recessions, change in societal norms, relationship patterns. This generation shows personality characteristics different from the preceding generation called generation X and succeeding generation called generation Y. Millennials have changed their goals, desires, beliefs, regarding the romantic relationships and as a result we are witnessing new practices of late marriages, low marriage rates, love marriages, high divorce rates, multiple marriages, live in relationships and childless marriages . Millennials who constitute to the demographic dividend of the country has not been psychologically studied much. Therefore, if we need to know what is the psychology of today’s society then the millennials who are the largest part of today’s population in India should be taken into the consideration. In this study personality and relationship satisfaction of millennials will be investigated. The relationship personality and romantic relationship has with emotional intelligence, happiness, life satisfaction and self-esteem in millennials will be the key attribute of study... In order to know these variables with respect to millennials it would be beneficial if we look into the theoretical construct of these variables and understand how these variables play a role in the psychology of millennials

Millennials are the most stereotyped, unappreciated and misunderstood generation because this is the first generation that has grown up in fast changing globalised world quite contrary to their parents and grandparents. They are the first one to witness radical changes socially, politically, economically and psychologically. They are the first ones to see norms and culture transition, change in family structures, culture of multinational companies, internet boom, social mobility from rural to urban areas and inflation etc. Internet has had unbelievable effect on the self-esteem, happiness, relationship satisfaction, personality of the youth. Too much information that millennials are exposed to act as a boon and a bane.

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The Gen Y generation has been exposed to increased risks of mental health issues due to the changing nature of the workforce, including part-time job, self-employment, temporary employment, irregular hours, night shifts, financial debt, population growth, a competitive environment, unhealthy lifestyles, unemployment, social media use, invariable work environments, and heavier workloads with fewer resources. These are just a few of the many factors that contribute to millennials experiencing higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression than previous generations. Millennials are experiencing very serious effects of burnout, particularly with regard to their emotional and mental health. Major depressive disorder is one of the most lethal psychopathologies effecting millennials. Due to Major depressive disorder there is a surge in suicide rate among millennials(Kuek, Xinrong, N. H., Inn, & Victoria (2021). Major depression had the largest growth in prevalence among the top 10 health conditions affecting millennials. What's more,

millennial women are 20 percent less healthy than men, with major depression being one of the main drivers. Majority (68 percent) of baby boomers and Gen Xers think their mental health is good or excellent, but only 49 percent of millennials say the same

## Reasons for current mental health crises in millennials

Man is a social animal and humans need unconditional love and regard for sustaining life. Millennials as a generation is undergoing these mental health crises because of unstable relationships. Millennials since interact with fewer people face to face and have an individualistic mindset which makes it a bit difficult for them to create belongingness. This generation has a tendency to impress the opposite gender from across the screen and garbing a personality which is in discrepancy to their real personality. This becomes the prime reason for unsustainability of relationships, high divorce rates, instant breakups and relationships hopping in this generation. It is found that millennials wait longer to get into marriage and they are finding romantic partners who can strive with them, match their ambitions and is their equal in every aspect. Helen Fisher (a biological anthropologist) described millennials romantic relationships as —Slow Love. Another assumption usually held about their relationships is that millennials are incapable of long term stable romantic commitments because of factors like less financial security, dating applications, delay in marriage, choice of not marrying, live in relationships etc. Relationships play an important role in each individual's life. More so, in the life of millennials when every association is bound by the systematic analysis of profits and losses which makes the nature of relationship or association become fragile. In all the associations that are formed by the individuals, mostly the romantic associations create a huge influence on the young minds. The social media, the cinema, books and magazines reflect the changes in the thought pattern of emerging adults regarding relationships. Thus, low relationship satisfaction in simple terms which means the absence of basic level of gratification and contentment one feels with his relationship is lacking in millennials making them mentally stressed.

Another reason for the critical mental health of millennials is finance. Millennials is the generation in India that has gone through challenges like economic slowdown, unemployment, pandemic, societal changes, more breakups in romantic relationships but still millennials as a whole are an optimistic generation. They have tried and created a —Better normal. Millennials being sensitive and resilient have diversified their dimensions and besides working and creating a better life for themselves, they think about society and communities so that it's not just them experiencing higher life satisfaction but world full of people who are satisfied from their life. Tenacity is one of the dominant characteristics of millennials. They have a zeal to create a meaningful life and derive higher life satisfaction from their life. But even though they are full of zeal and optimism millennials are finding it hard to stand on their own feet. This is postponing the launch of millennials into independent individuals. They don't own a house and are mostly living with their parents due to financial constraint, postponing marriages and children, leading to frustration and poor mental health condition. The condition of millennials can be described by the phrase that millennials log into their bank account from their smart phones to see a zero-bank balance. Millennials entered the job market when there were very few well-paying jobs—and they had massive student debt. With their college debt piling up and few employment options, millennials feel abandoned and not able to grow socially as had been promised.” Such is the paradoxical life of millennials leading to pent up anger, guilt and frustration in them. Millennials were disproportionately stressed about money before the pandemic due to student loan debt and a difficult job market. But the pandemic made things much, much worse.

Despite badly affecting people of all ages, the economic crisis brought on by the epidemic has increased stress for millennials to particularly high levels. Many people have lost their jobs permanently or been placed on furlough. As a result, a lot of people are looking for work in a poor economic climate where receiving government help can be unpredictable, inconsistent, and frequently bureaucratically challenging.

.Even millennials who have been able to keep their jobs are stressed about unemployment. They face concerns that they, too, may lose their jobs if recession comes or the economy is unable to meaningfully recover. The millennial age has been dubbed the "burnout generation," and burnout is a real issue that has a serious impact on millennials, particularly in terms of their mental and emotional health. Both personally and professionally, millennials are struggling. They cope with low pay, unhealthy working conditions, unemployment, care for elderly parents, housing bills, a lack of romantic relationships, the lack of possessions like a car and a home, poor physical and mental health, unpaid student loans, etc.

Whether it's financial debt, consumption of social media, always connected work environments or heavier workloads with fewer resources, there are many different factors that may cause higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression in millennials compared to past generations.

## **“Health Shock” in Millennials**

The deteriorating condition of mental health of millennials has led to several reports calling this condition as “Health Shock”. The situation is similar to that of the Silent Generation's during the Vietnam War, and the baby boomers during the outbreak of HIV/AIDS. The country's millennial population is experiencing a faster fall in health than earlier generations. Both physical and mental wellness are covered by this. They are being affected earlier in life and in greater numbers by diseases including hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol, serious depression, and hyperactivity, among others. Given the current patterns, millennials may experience higher mortality than Gen Xers did at the same age.

## **Social Media**

Millennials are the first generation to actively use social media during the growing up years. Earlier social media had no negative effect but today due to social media applications of Instagram, Facebook, Tinder, WhatsApp the comparison between one's life and others life lead to dwindling of self-esteem, stress, anxiety and poor mental health. Romantic relationships also are suffering due to online dating applications which is actually making millennials hop from one relationship to the next, thereby leading to a gradual feeling of isolation and emptiness. Social media has become “a blessing and a burden” for millennials, pointing out that it can be both a good and confusing source of information. But while social media is designed to connect people, it can actually make people feel even more lonely—especially if they tend to rely heavily on it like millennials.

## **Current Crises**

Millennials are the group at this point who have experienced multiple struggles, including a recession, leading to a crashed employment market. The housing shortage, college debt that is at an all-time high and now dealing with a pandemic when they should be putting down roots, building or buying a home, and starting their families or with young children. This recent global pandemic of Covid 19 has left millennials in lurch. Millennials who were already at a crucial point in their lives had to bear the brunt of consecutive national and international lockdowns. Education, employment, business, disruption in movements and everything suffered leaving millennials with no choice but to move back to their parents' home. This further led to an overwhelming feeling of being behind and feelings of shame, guilt and remorse. Suicides, drug overdoses and other self-harm tendencies as a result are rising due to the vulnerable mental state of millennials.

India has a startling statistic when it comes to mental health. A WHO report reveals that about 20% of India suffers from some form of mental illness. That's one in every five persons, with stress and depression on the rise amongst millennials.

Long work hours are one of the key reasons as millennials chase their goals and dreams, and they find it hard to juggle their work and personal life. They prefer jobs that offer them a combination that helps boost their personal as well as professional skills. And many times, when their work doesn't allow for that, it makes them dissatisfied, leading to stress. The work pressure doubles up through social pressure that youngsters today live in. Millennials are therefore testing the waters in terms of their employment choices. The rise of internet platforms has given younger generations more opportunities, which has resulted in a shift away from "conventional" profession choices like teaching and engineering towards "non-traditional" employment choices like blogging/content creation and modelling. The shows that, over time, societal pressure and family obligations, including marriage, have become less significant influences on professional decisions.

Because of the social stigma associated with mental illness among older generations, one of the main causes of rising mental stress is that most millennials don't feel comfortable discussing it with their parents.

Second, the paucity of mental health clinics, the scarcity of mental health professionals, and the high expense of therapy are obstacles to improving their mental health.

## What can be done?

Millennials are the first generation to experience such a fundamental change in how we live is the millennial generation. They are the first generation to experience a world that is increasingly interconnected through social media, dating services, and increased literacy. To improve the mental health of millennials, action must be taken. The physical and mental health of millennials must be taken into account simultaneously. They must approach their health with a holistic attitude in mind. So, adopting integrated care is essential right now. Although millennials are quite vocal about their mental health conditions but still, they find stigma attached to this issue of mental health. So, this stigma must be dealt with and seeking professional help in situations that acquire assistance but be done without thinking about societal norms. Millennials need to stay connected with the community. With the age of social networking and having hundreds of virtual friends, millennials create a world of loneliness for themselves. They are not integrated with real friends and family. They should establish trust with people and focus on building real relationships. This community bonding is essential for improving the mental health condition. Also, social media makes millennials compare themselves with others which creates an inferiority complex and thus leads to stress. Millennials are obsessed with displaying to the world their success without actually being that successful. Therefore, millennials need to be aware of their limits and know when to stop using social media before it becomes unhealthy for them. They should balance their job and personal lives and take breaks to think about their feelings. For millennials, job loss, unemployment, and student debt are major sources of stress. For help navigating economic crises, millennials could research financial planning and debt consolidation programmes. Covid 19 epidemic has been really harsh for millennials because they were the generation who was at the most crucial time of their lives when this epidemic struck. Millennials had to lose jobs, drop their academic years, shift back with parents, put off travel plans, deal with slump in business and what not. At this time millennials need to embrace the uncertainties and focus on the positive to let them go. Millennials need to organise their romantic relationships and not hop from one relationship to the next which is often the reason for disbalance in the life of millennials. Millennials have extreme level of awareness about the happenings in the world. Sometimes for their own mental balance it is a great idea to unplug oneself from the toxic media culture. Millennials are a unique and a very optimistic, so no matter what the challenges are for millennials they will surely tackle each challenge with their unique grit, humour and resilience.

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