

Keller Center Research Report

December 2025 (Volume 18, Issue 4)



The Listening Advantage: Match Your Message to the Buyer's Shopping Goal

Yenee Kim, PhD and Richard G. McFarland, PhD

Thriving Over Surviving: Prioritizing Mental Health

Elyria Kemp, PhD, Nwamaka A. Anaza, PhD, McDowell Porter III, PhD, Cassandra D. Davis, PhD, and Eli Jones, PhD

Understanding Visual Attention in Mobile Ads

Wen Xie, PhD, Mi Hyun Lee, PhD, Ming Chen, PhD, and Zhu Han, PhD

Measuring What Matters for Salesperson Self-Esteem

Nadia Pomirleanu, PhD and Babu John-Mariadoss, PhD

The Power of Autonomy in Complex Sales Negotiations

Christine Lai-Bennejean, PhD and Aaron D. Arndt, PhD

INSIDER: We Should All Be Millionaires

Teniola Oralusi, MA

INSIDER: Hook Point: How to Stand Out in a 3-Second World

Kashvi Lalchandani, MBA



Baylor University

HANKAMER SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Thriving Over Surviving: Prioritizing Mental Health

Elyria Kemp, PhD, Nwamaka A. Anaza, PhD, McDowell Porter III, PhD, Cassandra D. Davis, PhD, and Eli Jones, PhD

Employee mental health is a cornerstone of organizational success. For salespeople, mental health is critical as they navigate stressors like managing customer relationships, meeting demanding quotas, and achieving key performance indicators. In fact, a recent industry study revealed that nearly 63% of sales professionals face mental health challenges,¹ highlighting the toll that the high-pressure sales environment takes on salespeople's physical and emotional well-being. This raises an important question: how does the never-ending pressure of selling impact personal resources and mental health? Understanding this connection is crucial for developing targeted strategies that enhance the well-being and resilience of sales teams, ultimately driving better organizational outcomes.



Our Study

We aim to identify organizational resources that promote mental health and explore how access to mental health care influences salespeople's mental health engagement, well-being, and work performance. Our study prioritizes the mental health of the salesforce, sheds light on the importance of salespeople's access to mental healthcare and uses the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory to explain how job demands can result in physiological and psychological costs. The JD-R theory explains how workplace conditions impact employees. Job demands—heavy workload, time pressure, and role ambiguity—can lead to stress, burnout, and poor performance, while job resources—support, flexibility, mentoring, and career growth—help employees manage demands, stay motivated, and perform better. When demands are high and resources are low, well-being suffers. However, strong resources can reduce stress and improve job satisfaction, engagement, and retention.

We propose a framework showing how resource deployment can be harnessed to enhance salespeople's mental health. Thus, highlighting the significance of mental health in the selling environment and the importance of organizations in promoting mental health engagement to foster positive well-being and enhance job performance.

To test our developed framework, we collected data from 277 business-to-business (B2B) sales professionals across various industries, analyzed the data, and conducted in-depth follow-up

interviews with 23 B2B salespeople to obtain more detailed insights. Thus, we present the conceptual underpinnings of our research as embodied in the JD-R framework. Next, we propose that demand stressors that salespeople experience and the resources that can be implemented promote positive well-being.

Study Findings

Our findings consistently highlight how the mounting pressure to meet sales goals and quotas, combined with the constant connectivity enabled by pervasive technology, can become a significant stressor for salespeople, often leaving them feeling depleted at the end of the workday. In response to these stressors, salespeople frequently rely on personal resources to shield themselves from the negative impact on their mental well-being. Positive factors, such as experiencing uplifting emotions, having supportive colleagues with whom to share challenges, and maintaining an optimal work-life balance, can help mitigate the effects of these stressors.

Additionally, our findings emphasize the critical role of organizational efforts in fostering mental wellness. Managers and supervisors who actively support and normalize mental health play a vital role in creating a healthier work environment. Organizations are encouraged to implement resources that alleviate the negative effects of demand stressors by prioritizing the mental health of their salesforce. This can be achieved by normalizing conversations about well-being across all channels of worker engagement and ensuring that mental health is communicated to employees as a key priority. Ultimately, for salespeople to thrive in their roles and contribute to increased organizational productivity, it is essential for both individuals and organizations to recognize their shared responsibility in maintaining and promoting mental wellness.

Real Estate Implication

The importance of thriving and prioritizing mental health for salespeople cannot be overstated. Our study's findings highlight that salespeople can perform at their best only when their well-being is prioritized. It is crucial for real estate agents to consciously step back from the hustle and grind to focus on their mental health.

However, the responsibility for mental well-being should not rest solely on the shoulders of salespeople. Real estate firms have a significant role to play in fostering a culture of mental health awareness. For instance, firms can encourage healthy habits around the use



of technology by establishing boundaries outside core working hours. Additionally, investing in resources that support work-life balance can be instrumental in mitigating job-related stressors.

Firms should also prioritize early identification of mental health challenges and provide targeted resources to address them. This includes offering educational materials, hosting seminars and workshops to equip employees with stress management techniques, and training leadership to recognize and respond appropriately to mental health concerns. By cultivating supportive leadership, firms can create an environment where team members feel understood and valued.

Finally, firms can provide multiple pathways for salespeople to access mental health programs, ensuring these resources are accessible and tailored to employee needs. In doing so, real estate organizations can empower their sales teams to thrive, leading to better performance and overall work satisfaction.

Recommended Reading

Elyria Kemp, Nwamaka A. Anaza, McDowell Porter III, Cassandra Denise Davis and Eli Jones (2024), “Prioritizing Wellness Amidst the Hustle and Grind: A Framework for Supporting the Mental Health of B2B Sales Professionals,” *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.2024.2407804>

Recommended Reading

1. Uncrushed (2022), “2022 State of Mental Health in Sales Report,” Accessed September 15, 2023. <https://saleshealthalliance.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2022-State-of-Mental-Health-in-Sales-Report-1.pdf>

About the Authors

Elyria Kemp, PhD

Professor of Marketing, University of New Orleans

Dr. Elyria Kemp (PhD – University of Arkansas) teaches at the undergraduate, graduate and executive levels at the University of New Orleans. She teaches courses in the marketing, MBA and health care management programs, and has received the "Professor of the Year" award in the Executive Master of Science Health Care Management program. Dr. Kemp has published over a hundred peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings. Her research explores emotions and decision-making as it relates to consumer well-being and health care. She also examines how health and nutrition issues affect vulnerable consumers and minority communities. Professor Kemp has been recognized as a “Healthcare Hero” by New Orleans City Business. She has also been an Advertising Educational Foundation Fellow, through which she completed a visiting professorship with IBM and Ogilvy & Mather. Dr. Kemp has also been a visiting professor with the Lilly Marketing Institute at Eli Lilly Pharmaceutical Company.

Nwamaka A. Anaza, PhD

Professor of Marketing, Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Dr. Nwamaka Anaza's (PhD – Purdue University) areas of expertise focus on studying employees in service roles with particular interest directed to sales professionals, public, and non-profit employees. She also specializes in consumer behavior and has taken up a recent interest in financial technologies. Dr. Anaza chose a career in higher education because of her passion for enlightening minds and creating a positive change in the lives of students.

McDowell Porter III, PhD

Associate Professor, California State University, Fresno

Dr. McDowell Porter III (PhD – Louisiana State University) is a highly accomplished researcher and author whose articles have been published in high-quality journals such as the *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, the *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, the *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, the *International Journal of Advertising* and multiple publications in *Psychology & Marketing*. Dr. Porter's work has had a positive social impact, including helping students gain acceptance into MBA and PhD programs, promoting networking skills to middle and high school students, teaching undergraduate students how to market local businesses through active social media posting (using hashtags like #backinbusiness and #openforbusiness), and advocating for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belongingness (DEIB) research as the DEIB Track Co-Chair for the Academy of Marketing Science 2021 and 2024 Summer Conferences. He was also the Digital and Social Media Marketing Track Co-Chair at the 2022 American Marketing Association's Summer Academic Conference.

Cassandra Denise Davis, PhD

Assistant Professor of Marketing, Wayne State University

Dr. Cassandra Denise Davis (PhD – University of Arkansas) teaches classes in consumer behavior and consumer and industrial buying behavior. Her expertise lies in consumer well-being, stigmatized identity, health decision making, service marketing, information provision and counter persuasion, goals and motivation, and vice consumption. She has published in reputable journals such as the *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Education*, and the *Journal of Business Research*.

Eli Jones, PhD

Professor of Marketing, Texas A&M University

Dr. Eli Jones (PhD – Texas A&M University) is a Professor of Marketing, Peggy Mays Eminent Scholar, and the former Dean of Mays Business School at his alma mater. He served as the Dean of three flagship business schools over 13 years—Mays Business School, the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas, and the E. J. Ourso College of Business at Louisiana State University. Before becoming a dean, he was on the faculty at the University of Houston as an Assistant Professor, Associate Professor (with tenure), Full Professor, Associate Dean for Executive Education Programs, Director of the Program for Excellence in Selling, and

the founding Executive Director of the Sales Excellence Institute. He has published sales and sales management research in top academic journals. He co-authors two professional books, “Selling ASAP” and “Strategic Sales Leadership: Breakthrough Thinking for Breakthrough Results.” His new book, “Run Toward Your Goliaths,” is about his and his wife’s faith journey. He is the recipient of Excellence in Teaching awards on the university, national, and international levels, having taught strategic selling, advanced professional selling, key accounts selling, sales leadership, and marketing strategy at the undergraduate and MBA levels and in executive education programs globally.



Keller Center Research Report

Baylor University | Keller Center for Research | Hankamer School of Business
One Bear Place #98007 | Waco, TX 76798

www.baylor.edu/kellercenter | Keller_Center@baylor.edu

*Keller Center Research Report is a trademark owned by Baylor University
© Baylor University All rights reserved.*