



## Is mindfulness related to how long one spends with an organization?

### A cross-sectional comparison of dispositional mindfulness & military time-in-service

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#### Problem

Workforce stability is important to maintain corporate memory, smooth operations, and workplace dynamics. Two reasons employees remain with a company are: (1) job satisfaction and (2) the degree of comfort one feels in the company environment (Flowers & Hughes, 1973). Dispositional mindfulness has been correlated with work-life balance, job performance (Reb, et al., 2014) and with organizational mindfulness and workplace safety (Dierynck, et al. 2017). Thus, dispositional mindfulness may contribute to employee job satisfaction and well-being, and impact job retention.

#### Purpose

To examine if dispositional mindfulness is associated with time-in-service (TIS) among a sample of active duty and veteran U.S. military service members

#### Method

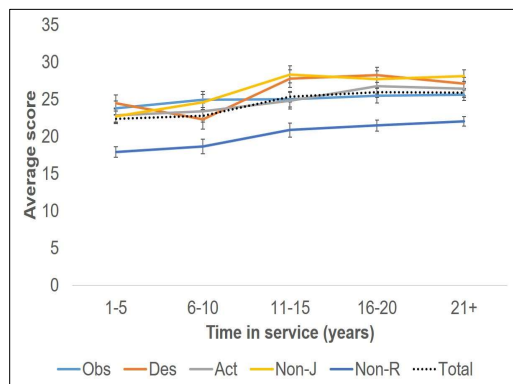
233 active duty and veteran U.S. Military service members completed: 1) A demographics survey and 2) the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer, et al., 2008). TIS distribution was: 1-5 years (19%), 6 - 10 years (16%), 11 - 15 years (14%), 16-20 years (23%), and 20+ years (28%). Descriptive statistics and a multivariate analysis were used.

#### Results

Volunteers were primarily male (53.9%), Caucasian (53.5%), married (58.4%), had completed college (61.3%), and were veterans (65.8%), with average age of  $48.23 \pm 12$ . Average TIS was  $15.26 \pm 8.64$  years. Age and FFMQ scores were not significantly correlated,  $p > .05$ .

A MANOVA showed FFMQ subscale scores were significantly different between the TIS groupings,  $F(20,900) = 2.11$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Scores on the FFMQ



Obs = observe, Des = describe, Act = acting, Non-J = non-judgement, Non-R = non-react

Subscale differences were:

- **Observing:** no significant differences,  $p > .05$
- **Describing:** those with 6-10 yrs. TIS had lower *describe* scores than those with 16-20 yrs.,  $p < .001$  and 21+ yrs.,  $p < .004$
- **Acting with Awareness:** no significant differences,  $p > .05$
- **Non-judging of Inner Experiences:** those with 1-5 yrs. TIS had lower *non-judging* than those with 21+ yrs. TIS,  $p < .004$ .
- **Non-reactivity:** those with 1-5 yrs. TIS had lower *non-reactivity* scores than those with 16-20 yrs. TIS,  $p < .03$  and 21+ yrs. TIS,  $p < .004$ . Those with 6-10 yrs. TIS had lower *non-reactivity* scores than those with 21+ yrs. TIS,  $p < .01$ .

Total FFMQ was significantly different among the groups,  $F(4,232) = 6.42$ ,  $p < .0001$ . Those with 1-5 and 6-10 yrs. TIS had significantly lower scores than those 16-20 and 21+ yrs.,  $p$ 's  $< .05$ . Scores for the 11-15 yr. group were not different,  $p$ 's  $> .05$ .

#### Discussion

This study investigated whether the length of time a person spent working in an organization (U.S. Military) was associated with their dispositional mindfulness. Three specific facets of dispositional mindfulness were correlated with TIS: (1) Describing: the tendency to describe and label sensations, (2) Non-Judging: being non-evaluative of inner experiences, and (3) Non-Reactivity: the tendency to allow thoughts and feelings to come and go, without being too involved in them. Our results did not explain whether individuals that possess a mindful disposition are more likely to spend greater TIS or if greater TIS contributes to a mindful disposition, however the findings were not explained by age. Perhaps those who are more mindful are able to derive positive meaning from their military service, without judging themselves for their actions, and are more skilled at not reacting to internal thoughts and emotions. Yet again, it may be that these characteristics develop over time, as the ethics and values of the individual and the military become aligned, their personal and professional responsibilities grow, and they see the 'bigger picture' of their service to their country. Certainly, the question of 'what comes first: the chicken or the egg?' is intriguing. Additional research exploring the relationships between mindfulness and one's work and daily life activities appear warranted.

#### Conclusions

Dispositional mindfulness is related to the amount of time military service members remain on active duty, unrelated to years of age. Although the explanatory factors underlying this relationship remain elusive, it is recommended that future research examine how mindfulness is related to, and perhaps predictive of, job longevity and other work-related metrics.

#### References

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