

Article

# Military Experience in Civilian Government Organizations: An Exploratory Study of Its Effects on a Range of Work Attitudes and Behaviors

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**Abstract:** There is a large body of research that has comparatively explored the relationship that military experience has with the attitudes and behaviors of employees who work in military organizations. However, very few studies have extended this line of research in civilian organizations. This study seeks to add to this body of research by exploring whether there are meaningful attitude and behavioral differences between veterans and non-veterans who work in a government civilian organization. Using a sample of 500 federal employees in the United States, the findings of this study revealed that prior military experience had no meaningful relationship to the work satisfaction, performance, person-organization fit, public service motivation, work stress, nor turnover intentions of public employees. The most important predictors of the work attitudes of employees were their age, education level, full-time status, and years of work experience. The implications this study has for the field of public management are discussed.

**Keywords:** organizational behavior; work stress; satisfaction; public management



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## 1. Introduction

There are over 20 million living veterans in the United States of America according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. These individuals have served and protected the United States from foreign and domestic threats. After 20 years of honorable service, military officers and enlisted personnel can retire with 50% of their basic pay, full medical coverage, and a host of other benefits for the rest of their lives. According to the US Congressional Budget, retirements from the military will exceed two million per year in the next decade. However, despite the generosity of military retirement benefits, most military personnel are not in a financial position to retire from the workplace. Most military employees will need to find a second career as civilians in order to maintain a comfortable living standard. Fortunately, Congress has responded to the needs of veterans by establishing the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act in 1994. This law places a premium on hiring veterans into federal agencies. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during certain specified periods or in military campaigns are generally entitled to preferences over non-veterans both in federal hiring practices and in retention during reductions in force.

Given the emphasis that the United States has placed on the successful integration of veterans into civilian workplaces, this study seeks to understand whether there are meaningful differences between public employees based on their military experience. Specifically, what relationship does military experience have to job and organizational satisfaction, job stress, performance, public service motivation, person-organizational fit, and turnover intentions? This research is important for at least two reasons. Firstly, the findings will improve the ability of public managers to retain employees with military experience by identifying potential problems and barriers that may be detrimental to their

experiences in civilian organizations. While the public sector has placed a premium on hiring military veterans, it is also important that these valuable resources are retained and well-adjusted in these organizations. Veterans offer significant benefits to civilian organizations, especially in terms of the skills and dispositions they have regarding teamwork, leadership, attention to detail, performance, and diversity (CES 2013; SHIRM 2018). Secondly, the transition of individuals from the military into civilian life should be a major focus for public management scholars. Yet, research on this issue has been largely absent from the public management literature (Charbonneau et al. 2020; Ngaruiya et al. 2014; Taylor et al. 2013; Teclaw et al. 2016). More research will help direct future research and hypotheses on the topic. This paper will seek to add to this body of research using data gathered from a survey of employees working for a large federal agency in the Department of Homeland Security Administration.

Moreover, this paper is organized in to several sections. First, this paper will explore the literature of studies on the work attitudes and behaviors of military personnel. Particular attention will be given to the findings of comparative research that sheds light on the relationship that military experience has to the attitudes of employees. Second, the methods that were used to collect the data will be presented. Third, the findings of this research will be presented. Finally, this paper will conclude with a discussion of the implications that the findings have with regards to the field of public management.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Attitudes and Behaviors of Military Personnel

There is a broad literature on the attitudes and behaviors of military personnel from the standpoint of burnout (Ballenger-Browning and Schmitz 2011), commitment (Allen 2003; Gade 2003; Gade et al. 2003; Heffner and Gade 2003; Karrasch 2003), stress (Bokti and Talib 2009; Day and Livingstone 2001; Walsh et al. 2010), public service motivation (Taylor et al. 2013), job satisfaction (Ahmadi and Alireza 2007; Demir 2002; Lundquist 2008; Proyer et al. 2012; Reiner and Zhao 1999; Viera 2012; Wilson and Butler 1978), turnover (Bluedorn 1979; Dupré and Day 2007; Harrington et al. 2001; Heilmann et al. 2009; Huffman et al. 2005; Kim et al. 1996), person-environmental fit (McFadyen et al. 2005), and public service motivation (Brænder and Andersen 2013).

The findings of this research largely suggest that the attitudes and behaviors of military personnel are meaningful determinants of their experiences in military organizations. However, the comparative value of these findings is unclear especially in terms of whether there are differences between individuals with and without military experience. In other words, do individuals with military experience exhibit different levels of stress, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, public service motivation, and person-environmental fit when compared to their counterparts with no military experience? This study seeks to address these questions.

### 2.2. Competing Theories of Military Effects

There are at least two competing perspectives on the question of whether military experience is a meaningful predictor of work outcomes. From one perspective, meaningful differences would be found among employees on the basis of their military experience. There is a long-held assumption that individuals with military experience are different from the average civilian (Bachman et al. 1987). Past research had found that members of the military personified a “military mind”. According to Dorman (1976), the military mind can be characterized as “conservative, tradition-oriented, patriotic, aggressive, and intolerant” when compared to civilians. However, the question many scholars have sought to better understand is why. That is, what are the factors that were responsible for these differences? Are these differences driven by military organizations through their processes of socialization or by the self-selection of individuals into military service because of their unique dispositions?

One of the best examples of the organization socialization argument is basic training. Basic training is a grueling experience that is designed to align the personal values of recruits to those of the military. Similarly, the military exposes individuals to life changing experiences (i.e., war, diversity) that can fundamentally alter their mindsets. Still, despite the findings of a few studies to the contrary (Eskreis-Winkler et al. 2014; Jackson et al. 2012), the prevailing evidence suggest that the primary driver of the military mind is the disposition of individuals prior to military service (Bachman et al. 2000; Bachman et al. 1987; Campbell and McCormack 1957; Dorman 1976; Nteta and Tarsi 2015).

A second perspective regarding the question of whether military experience is a meaningful predictor of work outcomes is the attraction, selection, attrition (ASA) theory. ASA theory suggest that few differences would be found among employees based on their military experience. According to Schneider (1987), individuals are attracted to organizations whose members are similar to themselves. Individuals who do not fit in well with their co-workers are more likely to leave. This theory suggests that over time the characteristics of individuals within organizations will become more homogeneous, regardless of their prior experience. Additionally, the potential differences among employees based on their military experience would be lessened by the efforts of organizations to improve the transition of retiring military personnel into civilian workplaces. One such program that was authorized by Congress in 1990 and revamped by President Barack Obama with the signing of the Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act (VOW) is the Transition Assistance program (TAP). TAP supports military personnel and their families with various job training and other services during their transition into civilian life. TAP programs are likely to improve the fit between former military personnel and public organizations, and thus, dampen any dissimilarities between employees on the basis of their military experience.

### 2.3. Comparative Research in Military Organizations

What has empirical research found regarding the question of whether military experience makes a difference on the work attitudes and behaviors of public employees? Unfortunately, there is a limited body of comparative research that has explored whether active military personnel, veterans, and civilians possessed different work attitudes and behaviors in the military (Alpass et al. 1997; Blair and Phillips 1983; Fredland and Little 1983; O'Rourke 2000; Sanchez et al. 2004; Wilcove et al. 1991; Woodruff and Conway 1990), and most of this research focused on job satisfaction. The findings of this research suggest that active military personnel have lower job satisfaction when compared to other categories of employees. For example, Alpass et al. (1997) and Sanchez et al. (2004) found that veterans and reserve/national guard members displayed higher job satisfaction (Blair and Phillips 1983; Fredland and Little 1983; Woodruff and Conway 1990), even though O'Rourke (2000) found that military nurses were slightly more satisfied with their work than civilian staff who work in military hospitals.

### 2.4. Comparative Research in Civilian Organizations

The existing research suggest that the work attitudes of active military personnel are generally worse than non-active military personnel in military organizations. However, the extent to which these findings are generalizable to civilian organizations is unclear. Is military experience associated with unfavorable work attitudes in civilian organizations? The very limited body of research that has addressed this question have reached mixed conclusions. For example, Olmstead (2011) found that veterans had higher job satisfaction when compared to non-veterans in civilian organizations. However, Van Maanen (1975) and Zangaro and Johantgen (2009) found that police recruits who had military experience initially reported having higher motivation, commitment, and satisfaction when compared to officers without military experience, but these differences faded as their years of experience increased. Along these same lines, Zangaro and Johantgen (2009), Teclaw et al. (2016),

and [Tao and Campbell \(2020\)](#) found that non-veterans reported significantly higher job satisfaction than veterans in civilian government work settings.

Nonetheless, while much of the comparative research between veterans and non-veterans focuses on job satisfaction, there is even less research on the relationship that military experience has to other important attitudes and behaviors in civilian government workplaces, such as public service motivation (PSM), person-organizational fit (PO fit), and commitment. These concepts are among the most researched in the fields of general management and public administration and has been found to be significantly related to various work outcomes in government organizations, and yet, there is a limited amount of research that have comparatively explored the relationship that military experience has to these outcomes, especially in civilian government organizations. For instance, PSM is an ethic that attracts individuals to opportunities that support their communities and public service missions, and fulfills their altruistic needs ([Perry and Wise 1990](#)). The concept is connected to a range of work attitudes and behaviors ([Bright 2007, 2008, 2013](#); [Caillier 2016](#); [Gould-Williams et al. 2015](#); [Kim 2012](#)). While there are studies that have explored the connection that military experience has to the level of PSM of undergraduate students ([Ngaruiya et al. 2014](#)) and deployed military personnel ([Brænder and Andersen 2013](#)), there are no studies that were found that explored the influence of military experience on the level of PSM among employees in civilian work organizations.

Likewise, there is a large body of research in the general management and public administration fields that has explored the effects of person environment (PE) fit theory in organizations ([Kristof-Brown et al. 2005](#)). PE fit is a multidimensional concept that argues that work outcomes are influenced by the relationship between the characteristics of the work environments (i.e., goals, demands, and/or resources) and the characteristics of individuals (i.e., values, interest, needs, and/or abilities). PE fit has multiple subtypes, with person-organization (PO) fit being among the most popular. The PO fit theory suggests that when the demands of the work environment exceed the abilities of the individuals to meet them, a misfit will be the result. Misfits between the characteristics of organizations and its employees are detrimental to a range of work outcomes. Only one study was found that explored whether military experience influences PO fit. The findings of this study concluded that PO fit is an important predictor of work engagement and performance of military personnel ([Sørli et al. 2020](#)). Active military personnel with high of PO fit reported feeling more engaged after entry into an educational program and had higher task performance when compared to candidates who had lower levels of PSM. Unfortunately, no studies were found that comparatively explored the relationship of military experience to perceptions of PO fit in civilian government organizations.

Similarly, there are decades of research on work stress and its influence in organizations. [Folkman and Lazarus \(1984\)](#) defined stress in terms of a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding their resources and endangering their well-being. Stress will become aversive when it leads to a strain, which is a condition that occurs when stress surpasses the available resources, coping strategies, and control available to manage it. The consequences of stress and/or strain on the physical and psychological health of employees, as well as their performance, commitment, and satisfaction are well documented. Are military veterans more capable of handling the stress associated with public service jobs? Existing research supports the argument that military experience is a resource for public employees in high-stress occupations, such as policing ([Hartley et al. 2013](#); [Ivie and Garland 2011](#)). Yet, more research is needed to confirm the generalization of these findings to other types of civilian non-paramilitary style organizations.

Finally, existing research has demonstrated that strong connections exist between organization commitment and a range of work outcomes, such as job satisfaction, performance, and turnover intentions ([Meyer et al. 1989](#); [Randall 1990](#); [Reichers 1985](#); [Steers 1977](#)). Commitment refers to the feelings of obligation to stay with the organization, the identification with and involvement in a particular organization, and the willingness of

individuals to give energy and loyalty to an organization (Meyer and Allen 1991; Reichers 1985). To what extent does commitment vary on the basis of one's military experience? The only study that was found that explored this connection was Liggans et al. (2019). These scholars found that military experience was associated with lower organization commitment levels when compared to non-veterans. Again, more research is needed to confirm this finding.

Above all, the purpose of this study is to fill the gaps in the literature by exploring whether significant differences exist between military experience and a range of attitudes and behaviors among public employees in a civilian government organization. This study is particularly interested in determining whether any differences found between veterans and non-veterans are associated with detrimental work outcomes. Such findings would support the need to improve the transition of veterans in civilian workplaces and help public managers target the outcomes that principally need attention. The information can also help increase the amount of research that improves our understanding of the causes and consequences of military experience in civilian organizations. However, if the ASA theory is correct, few differences would be found among employees on the basis of their military experience. However, using the findings of existing research as a guide, it is expected that military experience will be significantly related to the work attitudes and behaviors explored in this study.

Study Hypothesis: Military experience will be meaningfully related to work satisfaction, job stress, PSM, PO fit, and the turnover intentions of public employees.

### 3. Methods

The data for this study were drawn in 2017 from federal employees working for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) within the Department of Homeland Security in the State of Oregon. The survey population were employed at the same occupational classification level and served on the front line of the agency. As front-line employees, their work required direct contact with citizens during the course of their daily work. To stay abreast of the latest rules and regulations that governed their work, all employees were required to undergo monthly recertification training sessions. Agency officials integrated the survey instrument into one of these required training sessions. The employees were provided with a workspace and instructions on how to complete the survey. The survey instructed the employees that their participation in the study was completely voluntary; their individual answers would be kept confidential; they could refuse to answer any question that made them uncomfortable; and that they could end the survey at any time with no penalty or loss. In total, 557 useable surveys were collected, with a response rate of 97%. The study sample was representative of the study population in terms of age, gender, and full-time status.

As shown in Table 1, several major variables were collected in this study. Military experience was collected from a single survey question: What is your military status? The response categories included Active Duty, Reserves, Veteran/Retiree, and No Military Experience. No Military Experience was coded as 0, whereas Active Duty, Reserves, and Veteran were coded as 1. PSM was collected using Kim (2009) 12-item revision of Perry (1996) 24-item PSM scale and summed. This scale fit well with the data (GFI = 0.952, NFI = 0.930, CFI = 0.930). PO fit was collected using multiple survey questions and conceptualized in terms of supplementary fit. For instance, high levels of agreement with the statements that "my values and goals are very similar to the values and goals of my organization" was an indicator of high levels of fit to their organization. The questions were found to have good internal validity (Cronbach's alpha = 0.790) and were summed. Work stress, job and organization satisfaction, job performance, and turnover intentions were each collected using single item survey questions. In addition to the primary study variables, several demographic variables were collected and used as control variables in the study: age, gender, education level, minority status, full-time status, and years of work experience.

**Table 1.** Description of study variables (N = 557).

Label	Description/Survey Question	Variable Coding	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Age	What year were you born?	Years of Birth-Year of Study	19	74	42	13.413
Education	What is the highest level of education you have completed?	(1) No College to (5) Masters/Higher	1	5	2.69	0.983
Gender	What is your gender?	(0) Male, (1) Female	0	1	0.45	0.497
Military	What is your current military service status?	(0) No Military, (1) Military	0	1	0.19	0.392
Minority	How would you describe your racial or ethnic group?	(0) Minority (1) Non-minority	0	1	0.75	0.430
Full-Time	Are you a full-time employee?	(0) Part-time, (1) Full-time	1	1	0.78	0.418
Job Sat	How satisfied are you with your current job?	(1) Extremely Dissatisfied to (6) Extremely Satisfied	1	6	4.03	1.428
Org Sat	In general, how satisfied are you with your organization?	(1) Extremely Dissatisfied to (6) Extremely Satisfied	1	6	3.82	1.452
Perform	What rating did you receive from your supervisor on your most recent performance appraisal on your job this year?	(1) Terrible to (5) Excellent	1	5	4.21	0.728
Person-Organization Fit (PO)	My values and goals are very similar to the values and goals of my organization.	(1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree	1	6	4.25	1.234
	I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	(1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree	1	6	3.80	1.294
	What this organizations stand for is important to me.	(1) Strongly Disagree to (6) Strongly Agree	1	6	4.87	1.046
PSM	APM	Sum PSM items 1, 2, 3	3	18	11.82	2.68
	CPI	Sum PSM items 4, 5, 6	3	18	13.03	2.55
	COM	Sum PSM items 7, 8, 9	3	18	12.09	2.54
	SS	Sum PSM items 12, 13, 14	3	18	12.55	2.73
Stress	How stressful is your job?	(1) Not Stressful to (5) Extremely Stressful	1	5	3.13	1.039
Turnover	Within the next 2 years, how likely are you to leave your current organization for a job in another organization?	(1) Extremely unlikely to 6 Extremely likely	1	6	3.69	1.788
Work Experience	How many years have you worked for the TSA?		0	16	6.74	5.14

The analysis of this study was conducted in two stages. First, a bivariate correlation analysis was conducted for the purpose of confirming the relationships among the study variables. Second, several linear regression models were used to test the relationships among military experience, job and organizational satisfaction, performance, PSM, PO fit, stress, and turnover intentions, while considering the effects of the control variables. Statistical significance was set at 0.05, two-tailed. All regression weights are standardized maximum likelihood estimates.

#### 4. Findings

Table 2 displays the characteristics of the sample in terms of their demographics. The majority of the respondents were between 18–40 years old (52%), had some to no college experience (53%), identified as male (55%) and White (75%), worked full-time (78%), and had no military experience (81%). Table 3 displays the findings regarding the work attitudes and behaviors of the respondents. The trends suggest that the respondents hold very positive perceptions regarding their job and organizational satisfaction, and performance levels. In total, 71% of the respondents reported that they were “slightly” to “extremely” satisfied with their jobs and 65% were satisfied with their organization. Their perceptions regarding their performance levels were even higher: 96% of the respondents reported that they received “good” to “excellent” performance ratings. However, unlike their satisfaction and performance scores, the respondents’ stress and turnover levels were less positive. When asked “How stressful is your job?”, 54% of the respondent suggest that their jobs were “moderately” to “extremely” stressful. The turnover intentions of the respondents appeared to be much more polarized. When asked if they had plans to leave their organization for a job in another within the next two years, 43% of the respondents indicated that they were “extremely” to “slightly” unlikely to leave, whereas 57% were “slightly” to “extremely” likely to leave.

**Table 2.** Respondents’ characteristics.

	N	%
Age		
18 to 30 years old	131	25%
31 to 40 years old	143	27%
41 to 50 years old	90	17%
51+ years old	167	32%
Education Level		
No College	35	6%
Some College	260	47%
AA/Technical	122	22%
BA	123	22%
Masters/Higher	17	3%
Gender		
Male	293	55%
Female	237	45%
Race and Ethnicity		
Black/African-American	18	3%
Hispanic/Latino	22	4%
White/Caucasian	399	75%
Asian/Pacific Islander	40	8%
Native American/Alaska Native	5	1%
Multi-Racial	47	9%
Full-time Status		
Part-time	124	23%
Full-time	428	78%
Military Experience		
Reserves	7	1%
National Guard	6	1%
Veteran	90	17%
Civilian	441	81%

**Table 3.** Work attitudes and behaviors survey responses.

		Response Categories					
Job Sat	How satisfied are you with your current job?	Extremely Dissatisfied 7%	Moderately Dissatisfied 12%	Slightly Dissatisfied 10%	Slightly Satisfied 23%	Moderately Satisfied 38%	Extremely Satisfied 10%
Org Sat	In general, how satisfied are you with your organization?	Extremely Dissatisfied 9%	Moderately Dissatisfied 15%	Slightly Dissatisfied 11%	Slightly Satisfied 21%	Moderately Satisfied 38%	Extremely Satisfied 6%
Perform	What rating did you receive from your supervisor on your most recent performance appraisal on your job this year?	Terrible 1%	Poor 0%	Average 3%	Good 39%	Excellent 57%	
Stress	How stressful is your job?	Not Stressful 6%	Slightly Stressful 20%	Moderate Stressful 40%	Very Stressful 23%	Extremely Stressful 11%	
Turnover	Within the next 2 years, how likely are you to leave your current organization for a job in another organization?	Extremely Unlikely 18%	Moderately Unlikely 15%	Slightly Unlikely 10%	Slightly Likely 18%	Moderately Likely 18%	Extremely Likely 21%
PO Fit	My values and goals are very similar to the values and goals of my organization.	Strongly Disagree 5%	Disagree 6%	Somewhat Disagree 10%	Somewhat Agree 30%	Agree 37%	Strongly Agree 12%
	I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.	Strongly Disagree 7%	Disagree 11%	Somewhat Disagree 17%	Somewhat Agree 34%	Agree 24%	Strongly Agree 7%
	What this organizations stand for is important to me.	StronglyDisagree 2%	Disagree 3%	Somewhat Disagree 3%	Somewhat Agree 21%	Agree 41%	Strongly Agree 30%



Table 4 displays useful information regarding the extent to which the demographics of the respondents were related to their work attitudes and behaviors. The findings reveal that significant relationships were present among the demographics of the respondents, as well as their work attitudes and behaviors. Age was significantly correlated with organization and job satisfaction, PO fit, and turnover intentions. Interestingly, even though age and work experience were positively related, they appeared to work in different directions. Older respondents indicated that they were significantly more satisfied with their jobs and organization, reported greater fit to their organization, and had significantly lower turnover intentions than their younger co-workers. However, the respondents with more years of work experience reported having lower levels of organization satisfaction, PO fit, and PSM, as well as higher levels of work stress than the respondents with fewer years of work experience. On the bright side, similar to age, years of work experience was also associated with lower turnover intentions.

**Table 4.** Bivariate correlations among study variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	1												
2. Education	0.023	1											
3. Gender	−0.090 *	−0.065	1										
4. Minority	0.235 **	−0.023	−0.017	1									
5. Full-time	0.011	−0.124 **	−0.103 *	0.004	1								
6. Experience	0.508 **	−0.129 **	−0.092 *	0.098 *	0.293 **	1							
7. Job Satisfaction	0.129 **	−0.057	0.01	0.085	−0.035	−0.070	1						
8. Org Satisfaction	0.115 **	−0.029	0.061	0.047	−0.110 **	−0.128 **	0.708 **	1					
9. Performance	0.027	0.048	−0.010	−0.044	0.057	0.035	0.031	0.035	1				
10. PO Fit	0.101 *	0.02	0.091 *	0.107 *	−0.015	−0.140 **	0.558 **	0.606 **	0.144 **	1			
11. PSM	−0.013	0.055	−0.049	−0.009	0.005	−0.121 **	0.181 **	0.240 **	0.088 *	0.415 **	1		
12. Work Stress	0.003	−0.008	0.039	−0.066	0.135 **	0.134 **	−0.254 **	−0.277 **	0.046	−0.174 **	−0.005	1	
13. Turnover	−0.320 **	0.08	−0.003	−0.145 **	0.043	−0.134 **	−0.405 **	−0.416 **	−0.022	−0.349 **	−0.059	0.190 **	1

\* =  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p \leq 0.01$ .

Unlike age and work experience, gender, full-time status, and minority status had more limited relationships with the work outcomes; for example, full-time status was meaningfully related with organizational satisfaction and stress. The respondents who held full-time positions were significantly less satisfied with their organization and reported higher levels of work stress than their part-time counterparts. Of all the characteristics explored in this study, gender and minority status were only meaningfully related to PO fit, while turnover intentions were only related to minority status. In this case, the respondents who identified as female or non-minority reported having greater fit to their organization than males and minority members. Subsequently, minorities were significantly more likely to report higher turnover intentions than non-minorities.

In addition to the bivariate correlations among the study variables, this study investigated the extent to which military experience influenced these relationships, while taking into account the control variables. This study hypothesized that military experience will be meaningfully related to the work outcomes investigated in this study. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. As shown in Table 5, the findings revealed that military experience had no meaningful relationship with any of the work attitudes explored in this study. The respondent's satisfaction with their job and organization, work stress, self-reported performance, PO fit, and turnover intentions did not vary because of their military experiences when age, education, full-time status, and work experience were considered. As a matter of fact, the results revealed that the most important predictors of these attitudes were age, education level, full time status, and the work experience of the respondents.

The unique impacts that the control variables had on particular work outcomes are also worth reviewing. Firstly, job and organizational satisfaction were meaningfully related to age, education level, and years of work experience. The respondents who were older in age, had lower education levels, or had fewer years of experiences reported having

significantly high levels of job and organizational satisfaction. Secondly, PSM and stress were meaningfully related to work experience. The respondents with fewer years of experience reported possessing a significantly high level of PSM and low levels of job stress. Next, turnover intentions were meaningfully related to age and education levels. The younger respondents or those with high levels of education reported significantly low levels of turnover intentions. PO fit was meaningfully related to age, full-time status, and work experience. The respondents who were older in age, full-time employees, or had few years of work experience indicated that they had high levels of PO fit. Moreover, while there was a unique set of relationships among the demographic variables and the work outcomes, work experience emerged as the strongest predictor of job and organizational satisfaction, PO fit, PSM, and stress, when compared to age and education. Similarly, age emerged as the strongest predictor of turnover intentions when compared to education level.

**Table 5.** Control variables and military status regressed on study variables.

	Job Sat	Org Sat	Preform	PSM	Stress	Turnover	PO Fit
Age	0.238 **	0.257 **	0.044	0.074	−0.075	−0.333 **	0.259 **
Education	−0.108 *	−0.108 *	0.049	0.018	0.020	0.125 **	−0.038
Gender	0.006	0.053	−0.012	−0.062	0.047	0.019	0.089
Minority	0.036	0.005	−0.062	−0.012	−0.051	−0.073	0.068
Full-Time	0.028	−0.006	0.077	0.067	0.086	0.022	0.101 *
Work Experience	−0.252 **	−0.291 **	0.021	−0.194 *	0.163 **	0.042	−0.341 **
Military Status	0.034	0.027	−0.061	0.029	−0.002	0.062	0.057

Note: \* = significant at 0.05; \*\* = significant at 0.001.

## 5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the impact that military experience had on the attitudes and behaviors of public employees. This is the only known study in the field of public management and/or administration that comprehensively addresses this issue. The importance of this study grew from the need to improve managers' and researchers' understanding of the adjustment of military personnel in civilian government organizations. Above all, the findings revealed that military experience was not meaningfully related to any of the work outcomes investigated in this study. The respondents with military experience were no more or less satisfied with their jobs and organizations, received no different level of performance ratings, were no more concerned about the stress associated with their jobs, nor were they more likely to leave their jobs for another one. The most important predictors of these attitudes and behaviors were the age and work experiences of the respondents. There are several implications of these findings.

Firstly, this study confirms the long-held findings of the extant literature that demographics are predictors of the work attitudes and behaviors of employees (Ng and Feldman 2010). Age, education level, full-time status, and years of work experience were significant predictors of work satisfaction, PSM, job stress, turnover, and PO fit. However, among these demographics, years of work experience was the strongest predictor of job and organizational satisfaction, PSM, job stress, and PO fit, while age emerged as the strongest predictor of turnover intentions. The respondents with many years of work experience reported significantly more detrimental levels of job and organizational satisfaction, PSM, stress, and PO fit than the respondents with fewer years of work experience. On the other hand, age was negatively related to job stress. That is, the respondents' perceptions of stress tended to decrease as their age increased. The only work outcome not related to any of the control variables was self-reported performance.

Secondly, the finding suggest that military experience is not an important predictor of the work attitudes and behaviors of public employees in civilian organizations. This contradicts existing research and theory suggesting that there are significant differences between military experiences and job satisfaction, commitment, and stress (Liggins et al. 2019; Sørlie et al. 2020). The level of job and organizational satisfaction, stress, and turnover intentions in this study were not meaningfully related to the military experience of the

respondents. The veterans in this study reported no higher or lower levels of job satisfaction, organizational satisfaction, work stress, nor turnover intentions when compared to their non-veteran counterparts. Similarly, this study provided the first known tests of the relationships between military experience and PO fit, performance, and PSM. The findings of this study demonstrated that these work attitudes and behaviors do not vary on the basis of military experience. The respondents who had military experience reported that they had similar levels of PSM, PO fit, and self-reported performance when compared to the respondents without military experience.

The findings of this study can be explained from at least two different angles. From the first angle, the findings are consistent with the attraction selection attrition (ASA) theory (Schneider 1987). This theory predicts that few meaningful differences would be found among employees of a given organization. Organizations naturally grow more homogeneous by attracting individuals that are similar and driving out those who are different. It is conceivable that the respondents of this study were attracted and/or adjusted to their organization in similar ways irrespective of their military experience. In fact, existing research have found that large federal organizations are the most preferred work location for retiring military personnel (Biderman and Sharp 1968). This may be because large federal agencies are similar to military organizations, especially given the fact that both are government organizations.

However, from another angle, the findings may also be due to the occupation level of the respondents of this study. The respondents who were recruited to this study were all employed at the same job level. The job characteristics of the respondents did not vary in this study, and thus, they acted as an additional control variable. This suggest that the working conditions may be a major driver of work attitudes and behaviors, and thus, they may be a powerful mediating variable on the influence of military experience. If this is the case, the failure to control job level differences may be a reason why existing research found meaningful differences between the work attitudes of active military personnel and civilians.

Moreover, while this study adds to the field of public management, it is important to acknowledge its weaknesses. Firstly, while this study found no meaningful relationship between the attitudes and behaviors public employees on the basis of their military experience, it should be acknowledged that veterans are not a monolithic group. Veterans differ widely on the basis of their time in service, branch, military occupational specialty, rank, combat experience, and etc. These differences are likely to have fundamental impacts on the individuals and their behaviors. Even though the purpose of this study was to understand the effects of military experience at the group level, its influence may be more salient at a lower level of analysis. That is, it could be the case that some types of military experience are more influential on individual's attitudes and behaviors than other types. For example, an individual with 30 years of combat experience is likely to deal with work-related stress differently than the average public employee without military experience. Future research should comparatively explore the association of the influence that various types of military experience have on work outcomes in civilian organizations.

Secondly, this study utilized a cross-sectional research design and, thus, collected data from a single point in time. It may be the case that the attitudes of employees are not stable and change over time. While this study found that military experience was not a meaningful predictor at one point in time, it is possible that these results can change at another point in time. Third, this study drew its data from one department in the Department of Homeland Security in Oregon. Even though the results may be comparable to similar organizations in similar circumstances, there may be limits to the generalizability of this study's findings. This presents an opportunity for future research to confirm the findings of this study with data extracted from a broader sample of government organizations and jobs.

Relatedly, this study only focused on the direct relationship between military experience and several work outcomes, whereas the indirect relationship between military experiences and the work attitudes and behaviors were not explored. This is important

because the influence that military experiences may have on work outcomes could be more indirect through other work outcomes, such as years of experience. For example, an underlying assumption of the ASA model is that the adjustment that employees have to organizations is likely to be enhanced as their years of experience increase. Employees with more years of work experience in civilian organizations may be more adjusted to its characteristics, irrespective of their differing experiences in the military. Consistent with this argument, a post-hoc correlation analysis revealed that years of work experience and military status were positively related ( $R^2 = 0.161$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) in this study. As a result, the lack of meaningful relationships between military experience and any of the work outcomes could have been influenced by years of experience. Veterans with few years of experience in civilian organizations may hold significantly different work attitudes and behaviors when compared to employees with more years of work experience. Future research should bring clarity to this issue.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that former military personnel are transitioning successfully into civilian government organizations from the standpoint of a wide range of attitudes and behaviors explored in this study. While a limited number of existing studies have found significant differences among employees based on their military experience, the findings of this study challenge these conclusions. This study concludes that nothing is inherently different about employees with military experience when compared to the work attitudes and behaviors of non-veterans. The respondents of this study with military experience were no more or less adjusted to civilian work environments than their counterparts without this experience.

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