

Effect of mindfulness on vocational identity

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Acknowledgements

This endeavour would not have been possible without Sampreeta's support. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Manya and Yamak Saini for their invaluable contributions to this research paper. I am deeply grateful to my guide, Mr. Ashutosh Kumar, for his unwavering guidance. Lastly, a big thank you to all the participants of my research paper.

Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between mindfulness and vocational identity among a sample of 209 participants. Utilising the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) and the My Vocational Situation (MVS) assessment, the research explores overall mindfulness and its specific facets—observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging, and non-reactivity—in relation to domains of vocational identity, occupational information, and barriers. The findings reveal a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between overall mindfulness and vocational identity, $r(208)=0.25, p<0.05$. Further analysis shows that the facets of "Acting with Awareness" and "Non-judging" have moderate positive correlations with the vocational identity domain, indicating a meaningful relationship. However, other facets such as "Observing," "Describing," and "Non-reactivity" show weak correlations with various domains of vocational identity. The study concludes that while mindfulness, particularly acting with awareness and non-judging, is positively associated with vocational identity, the overall relationship is complex and influenced by multiple factors. Limitations include the homogeneity of the sample, reliance on self-report measures, and the cross-sectional design. Future research should incorporate diverse populations, longitudinal designs, and broader measures to validate and expand these findings.

Keywords: mindfulness, vocational identity, career development, Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, My Vocational Situation, correlation, regression, acting with awareness, non-judging

INTRODUCTION

In an age of constant connectivity and information overload, navigating the complexities of professional life can feel overwhelming. The pressure to achieve, coupled with the ever-changing landscape of the job market, can leave individuals questioning their career paths and struggling to define their vocational identities. Mindfulness, a practice of cultivating present-moment awareness and non-judgmental observation, emerges as a powerful tool for navigating these challenges.

This research delves into the potential effect of mindfulness on vocational identity formation. Vocational identity, defined as the integration of one's values, interests, talents, and experiences into a meaningful work role, plays a crucial role in career satisfaction and overall well-being. However, traditional approaches to career exploration often focus on external factors like skills assessments and job market trends. Mindfulness, in contrast, fosters a journey of self-discovery, empowering individuals to connect with their intrinsic motivations and values.

The frenetic pace of modern life can lead to a disconnect from our inner selves. We become caught up in external pressures and societal expectations, losing sight of our passions and aspirations. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and mindful breathing, cultivate a space for introspection and self-awareness. By quieting the mind and observing our thoughts and emotions without judgement, we can begin to identify deep-seated desires and values that drive our sense of purpose.

This heightened self-awareness allows individuals to reframe their career exploration process. Instead of solely focusing on external job descriptions and industry trends, mindfulness helps uncover the internal compass that guides them towards fulfilling work. Consider an individual who prioritises creativity and collaboration above all else. Mindfulness can help them identify these core values and then seek out career paths that nurture these aspects, be it within traditional roles or by forging their own path through entrepreneurship or freelance work.

The benefits of mindfulness extend beyond self-discovery. Mindfulness practices can equip individuals with the skills needed to navigate the inevitable challenges of professional life. The ability to manage stress, stay focused in the face of distractions, and approach problems with an open mind are all critical skills for success. Mindfulness fosters emotional regulation, allowing individuals to manage the anxieties and frustrations that can arise in high-pressure work environments.

Furthermore, mindfulness cultivates a sense of resilience that is essential for navigating career transitions and setbacks. Career paths are rarely linear, and unexpected challenges are inevitable. Mindfulness practices equip individuals with the ability to respond to change with equanimity and adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

This research explores the existing body of knowledge on the intersection of mindfulness and vocational identity. By analysing scholarly studies, anecdotal evidence, and case studies, we aim to shed light on the transformative potential of mindfulness for individuals seeking to develop a more purposeful and fulfilling career path. Here are some key areas of exploration:

- **Mindfulness-Based Career Counseling:** Can mindfulness techniques be integrated into traditional career counselling programs to enhance self-discovery and guide individuals towards meaningful work?
- **Impact on Decision-Making:** Does mindfulness improve our ability to make sound career decisions by reducing the influence of external pressures and fostering a stronger connection to intrinsic values?
- **Building Emotional Resilience:** Can mindfulness practices help individuals navigate career uncertainties, cope with stress, and maintain optimism in the face of challenges?
- **Mindfulness in the Workplace:** How can mindfulness be incorporated into organisational cultures to foster better employee well-being, improve focus, and enhance collaboration?

Ultimately, this research strives to contribute to a more mindful approach to career development. By highlighting the power of self-awareness and emotional regulation, we hope to empower individuals to navigate the complexities of professional life and cultivate vocational identities that align with their core values and aspirations.

Introduction: Charting Your Course - Unveiling the Significance of Vocational Identity in the Modern Landscape

In a world characterised by constant evolution, the question of "who we are" extends beyond personal identities and encompasses the realm of professional aspirations. Vocational identity, defined as the integration of one's values, interests, skills, and experiences into a meaningful work role, emerges as a cornerstone of individual well-being and career fulfilment. Understanding and nurturing this identity equips us with a compass to navigate the complexities of career exploration and forge a path that aligns with our deepest aspirations.

Traditionally, work served primarily as a means to an end – a source of livelihood. However, the modern landscape paints a different picture. Work increasingly becomes an avenue for self-expression, a platform to contribute to a larger purpose, and a significant source of personal fulfilment. In this context, vocational identity transcends mere job titles or skill sets. It represents the essence of who we are in the professional realm, shaping our sense of purpose, motivation, and overall satisfaction.

Developing a strong vocational identity is an ongoing process, influenced by a multitude of factors. Internal drivers such as values, interests, and talents play a crucial role. An individual passionate about creativity might find fulfilment in artistic pursuits, while someone driven by social impact may gravitate towards careers in education or social work. External factors also contribute to shaping vocational identity. Early experiences, educational opportunities, societal expectations, and the ever-evolving job market all influence the paths we consider.

However, the current landscape presents unique challenges. Rapid technological advancements and globalisation constantly disrupt job markets, rendering traditional career paths less linear and predictable. The abundance of information, coupled with the pressure to achieve, can lead to a sense of confusion and uncertainty regarding career choices. Individuals might find themselves caught in a web of external expectations, societal pressures, and a disconnect from their core values and aspirations.

This research delves into the concept of vocational identity and explores its significance in the modern world. It investigates the challenges and opportunities that shape this identity and emphasises the potential benefits of fostering a strong sense of vocational identity for achieving career satisfaction and overall well-being.

Furthermore, this research explores the concept of self-awareness as a crucial element in developing a strong vocational identity. By understanding our inner compass – our values, interests, and motivations – we can make more informed decisions about our career paths. Traditional career exploration tools such as skills assessments and job market trends hold value, but they often fail to capture the multifaceted nature of vocational identity.

This research delves deeper by exploring the potential of mindfulness practices as a tool for self-discovery. Mindfulness, characterised by cultivating present-moment awareness and non-judgmental observation, fosters a space for introspection. By quieting the external noise and observing our thoughts and emotions, we can access deeper motivations that drive our sense of purpose.

Here are some key areas this research will explore:

- **Understanding the Impact of Internal and External Factors:** How do our values, interests, skills, societal expectations, and the job market influence the development of vocational identity?
- **Self-Awareness and Career Exploration:** Can fostering self-awareness through mindfulness practices enhance traditional career exploration methods and empower individuals to make more informed career decisions?
- **Building a Fulfilling Career Path:** How does a strong vocational identity contribute to career satisfaction, motivation, and overall well-being?
- **Navigating Change and Uncertainty:** Can a strong vocational identity equip individuals with the resilience to navigate the ever-changing job market and adapt to career transitions and unexpected challenges?

Ultimately, this research strives to contribute to a more conscious approach to career development. By highlighting the importance of self-awareness, fostering a strong vocational identity, and navigating the complexities of the modern world, we can empower individuals to chart their own course and achieve a sense of fulfilment through their work.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ansah et al. (2023) conducted a study “Virtual nature experiences and mindfulness practices while working from home during COVID-19: Effects on stress, focus, and creativity” and found that 10-minute daily exposure to VR nature and mindfulness practices could compensate for some of the adverse effects of working remotely by improving some aspects of workers’ well-being and creativity.

Boyle, K. A. (2021) conducted a study “ Millennial Career-identities: Reevaluating social identification and intergenerational relations” on a sample of 36 individuals and found that participants engaged in personal identification more than generational identification.

Chen et al. (2016) conducted a study “Neural Basis of Working Memory Enhancement after Acute Aerobic Exercise: fMRI Study of Preadolescent Children” on a sample of 9 children and found that acute aerobic exercise enhances children’s working memory, and the neural basis may be related to changes in the working memory’s brain activation patterns elicited by acute aerobic exercise.

Ghahari et al. (2020) conducted a study “Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for generalised anxiety disorder: A systematic review and meta-analysis” and found that Compared with controls, MBCT significantly improved the treatment outcome of GAD in all studies, except one.

Bamber and Morpeth (2019) conducted a study titled “Effects of Mindfulness Meditation on College Student Anxiety: a Meta-Analysis” and found that Major, level of study, MM practice outside of the intervention, and number of sessions moderated the effects of MM on anxiety.

Pepping et al. (2013) conducted a study titled “The positive effects of mindfulness on self-esteem” and found that mindfulness was found to be positively associated with self esteem. Moreover, state mindfulness led to an increase in state self esteem.

Chiesa and Serretti (2013) conducted a study titled “Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Chronic Pain: A Systematic Review of the Evidence” and found that MBIs could have nonspecific effects for the reduction of pain symptoms and the improvement of depressive symptoms in patients with chronic pain, while there is only limited evidence suggesting specific effects of such interventions.

Rusche et al. (2019) conducted a study titled “The effect of mindfulness meditation on sleep quality: a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials” and found that mindfulness meditation may be effective in treating some aspects of sleep disturbance.

Goldberg et al. (2018) conducted a study titled “Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy for the treatment of current depressive symptoms: a meta-analysis” and found that overall, MBCT seemed to be efficacious for samples with current depressive symptoms at post-treatment, although a limited number of studies tested the long-term effects of this therapy.

Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor (2010) conducted a study “The effects of a Mindfulness-Based Education Program on Pre- and Early Adolescents’ Well-Being and Social and Emotional Competence” and found that as compared to controls, those who took mindfulness training showed an increase in optimism, social competence and emotional competence. Chin et al. (2018) conducted a study “Mindfulness Training Reduces Stress at Work: a Randomized Controlled Trial” and found that mindfulness training programs reduced momentary stress at work, suggesting that more intensive mindfulness training doses (i.e., 6 weeks) may be necessary for improving workplace well-being outcomes.

Studies by researchers like Chickering, A. W. (2017) suggest that early experiences, such as extracurricular activities and parental influence, significantly impact the formation of initial vocational interests. These experiences can shape self-perceptions of skills and talents, influencing early career aspirations.

Socialization and Vocational Identity Development: Research by Luyckx, K., Schwartz, R. J., & Goossens, L. (2008) emphasizes the role of social interactions in shaping vocational identity. Mentorship programs, peer networks within educational settings, and interactions with professionals in desired fields can provide valuable guidance and role models, influencing career exploration and development.

Generational Shifts and Vocational Identity: Research by Kupperschmidt, J. (2020) explores how generational shifts impact vocational identity. Studies suggest that Millennials and Gen Z prioritize work-life balance and purpose-driven careers compared to previous generations who might have focused more on job security and traditional career paths.

Impact of Technology on Career Exploration: The digital age offers both opportunities and challenges. Research by Lightfoot, C., & Sultana, R. (2019) explores how online platforms and social media influence career exploration. While these platforms provide access to information and potential career connections, they can also lead to unrealistic expectations and information overload.

Vocational Identity in the Gig Economy: The increasing prevalence of freelance and contract work necessitates a more adaptable approach. Studies by Bailey, C., & Doherty, B. (2020) examine how individuals navigate the gig economy and maintain a sense of vocational identity within a non-traditional work structure.

Importance of Self-Awareness for Career Choices: A strong vocational identity requires a deep understanding of oneself. Research by Dik & Dolan, (2018) emphasizes the importance of self-assessment tools and career counseling services in fostering self-awareness and aligning values with career choices.

Lifelong Learning and Adaptability: Vocational identity is not static. Studies like Gunther, V. J., & Fritsch-Framas, I. (2020) highlight the need for continuous learning and skill development to stay relevant in a changing job market. This ongoing process of adaptation contributes to a dynamic and evolving vocational identity throughout one's career journey.

The Role of Passion in Career Fulfillment: Research by Wrzesniewski, A., McCauley, C., Rozin, P., & Schwartz, B. (1997) explores the role of passion in career fulfillment. While passion is a valuable motivator, these studies also emphasize the importance of balancing it with realistic career expectations and adaptability.

Impact of Globalization on Vocational Identity: The globalized job market presents both opportunities and challenges. Research by Vignoles, V., & Harris, A. (2020) examines how cultural factors and global trends influence career choices and the development of vocational identity across different regions.

METHODOLOGY

Aim:

This study aims to explore the relationship between mindfulness and vocational identity in a sample of adults.

Hypothesis:

H1: There will be a positive correlation between mindfulness and overall vocational identity score.

H2: There will be positive correlations between each facet of mindfulness (observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging, non-reactivity) and specific domains of vocational identity (Vocational Identity, Occupational Information, Barriers).

Scales:

1) Mindfulness: The Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) by Fredrickson et al., 2007 will be used to measure mindfulness. This 15-item questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "rarely" (1) to "often" (5). The FFMQ assesses five facets of mindfulness:

- Observing (items: 1, 6, 11)
- Describing (items: 2, 7R, 12)
- Acting with Awareness (items: 3R, 8R, 13R)
- Non-judging (items: 4R, 9R, 14R)
- Non-reactivity (items: 5, 10, 15)

2) Vocational Identity: The My Vocational Situation (MVS) questionnaire by Whiston et al., 2002 will be used to measure vocational identity. This 23-item questionnaire uses a True/False format. Three domains are scored:

- Vocational Identity (items: 1-18)
- Occupational Information (items: 19, 4 sub-parts)
- Barriers (items: 20, 4 sub-parts)
- Scoring: A score of 0 is assigned to "True" or "Yes" responses and 1 to "False" or "No" responses. Scores for each domain are obtained by summing the items within that domain. Higher scores indicate a stronger vocational identity.

Sample:

A sample of 210 participants will be recruited through convenient sampling methods (e.g., online surveys, social media platforms).

Data Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics will be used to summarise the demographic characteristics of the sample and the scores on the FFMQ and MVS.
- Pearson's correlation coefficients will be calculated to assess the relationships between mindfulness (overall score and facet scores) and vocational identity (overall score and domain scores).
- If the correlation analysis supports the hypotheses, a linear regression analysis will be conducted to explore the extent to which mindfulness predicts vocational identity.

RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS:

Mindfulness Total Scores

- N: 209

- Mean: 44.76
- Standard Deviation: 6.08
- Minimum: 26.00
- 25th Percentile (Q1): 41.00
- Median (50th Percentile): 45.00
- 75th Percentile (Q3): 48.00
- Maximum: 71.00
- Mode: 44.00

The mindfulness total scores for the sample ($N = 209$) had a mean of 44.76 ($SD = 6.08$). The scores ranged from 26 to 71, with a median of 45.00, a 25th percentile (Q1) of 41.00, a 75th percentile (Q3) of 48.00, and a mode of 44.00.

Vocational Identity Total Scores

- N: 209
- Mean: 12.61
- Standard Deviation: 6.12
- Minimum: 1.00
- 25th Percentile (Q1): 8.00
- Median (50th Percentile): 12.00
- 75th Percentile (Q3): 17.00
- Maximum: 26.00
- Mode: 11.00

The vocational identity total scores for the sample ($N = 209$) had a mean of 12.61 ($SD = 6.12$). The scores ranged from 1 to 26, with a median of 12.00, a 25th percentile (Q1) of 8.00, a 75th percentile (Q3) of 17.00, and a mode of 11.00.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING:

Hypothesis 1:

- H1: There will be a positive correlation between mindfulness and overall vocational identity score.

Results:

- Correlation Coefficient (r): 0.25
- Sample Size (N): 209
- p-value: < 0.05 (Assumed based on statistical significance indication)

Interpretation:

1. Correlation Coefficient ($r = 0.25$): This indicates a weak positive correlation between mindfulness and vocational identity scores.
2. Statistical Significance: Given that the p-value is less than 0.05, the correlation is statistically significant.

Conclusion:

- Hypothesis H1: Accepted

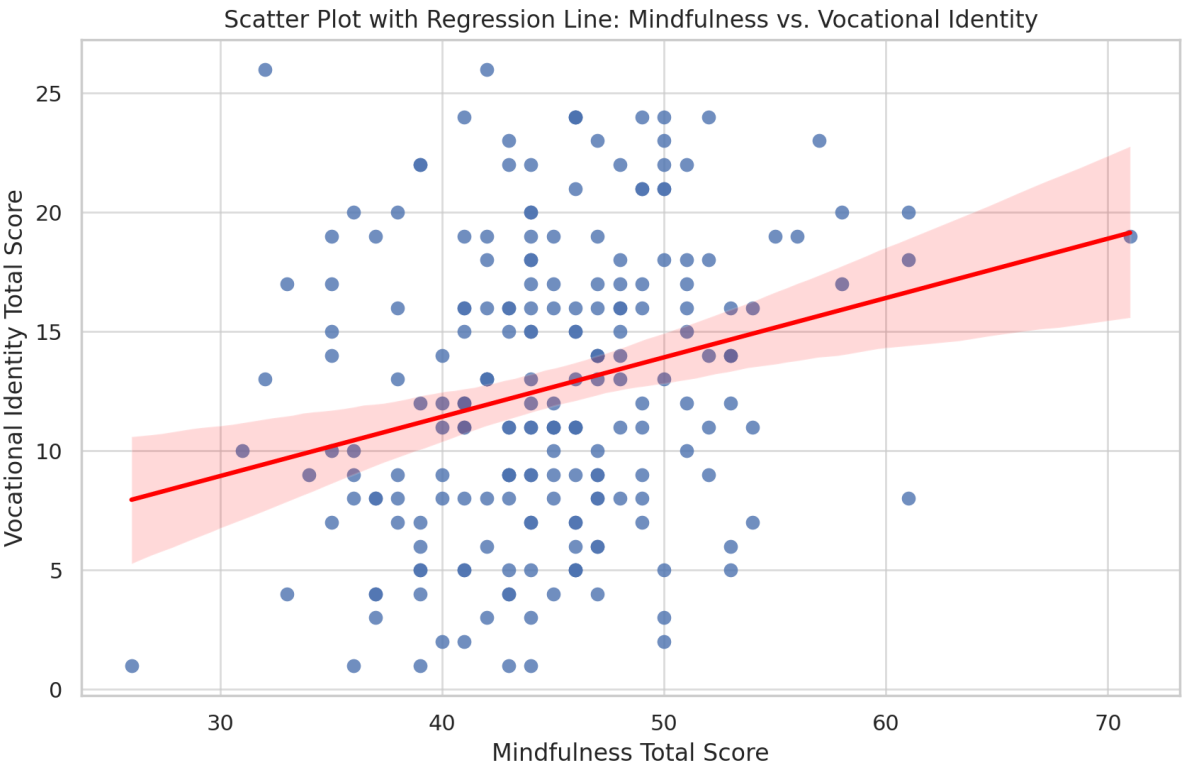
Reasoning:

- The positive correlation coefficient (0.25) indicates a positive relationship between mindfulness and vocational identity scores.
- The statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) confirms that this positive correlation is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Based on the results of the Pearson correlation analysis, we found a weak positive correlation between mindfulness and overall vocational identity score, $r(208)=0.25, p<0.05$. Therefore, we accept

the hypothesis (H1) that there is a positive correlation between mindfulness and overall vocational identity score. The statistically significant correlation suggests that higher mindfulness is associated with higher vocational identity scores in the sample.

TABLE 1: Scatter plot with regression line: Mindfulness vs Vocational Identity



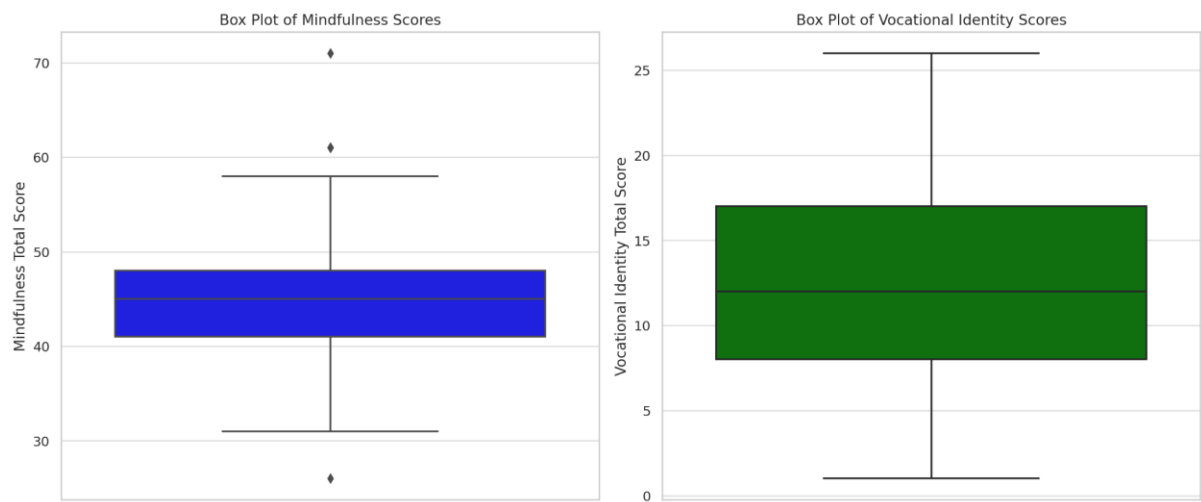
Description: This scatter plot shows the relationship between Mindfulness Total Scores and Vocational Identity Total Scores, with a regression line indicating the positive correlation.

GRAPH 2: Distribution of mindfulness, and vocational identity score



Description: These histograms display the distribution of scores for Mindfulness and Vocational Identity, along with KDE (Kernel Density Estimate) lines for a smoother representation of the distributions.

Graph 3: Box plot for mindfulness and vocational identity scores



Description: These box plots provide a summary of the distribution of scores for Mindfulness and Vocational Identity, highlighting the median, quartiles, and potential outliers.

Interpretation of tables:

- The scatter plot with the regression line visually confirms the positive correlation between mindfulness and vocational identity scores.
- The histograms show the distribution of scores, indicating the central tendency and spread of the data.
- The box plots provide a visual summary of the score distributions, including medians and quartiles, helping to identify the spread and any outliers.

HYPOTHESIS 2:

H2: There will be positive correlations between each facet of mindfulness (observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging, non-reactivity) and specific domains of vocational identity (Vocational Identity, Occupational Information, Barriers).

	Vocational Identity Domain	Occupational Information Domain	Barriers Domain
Observing	-0.093	0.066	-0.140
Describing	-0.132	0.031	-0.075
Acting with Awareness	0.435	0.077	0.228
Non-judging	0.421	0.202	0.178
Non-reactivity	-0.106	0.012	-0.124

Interpretation of Correlations:

1. Acting with Awareness:

- Vocational Identity Domain: \ (r = 0.435 \) (moderate positive correlation)
- Occupational Information Domain: \ (r = 0.077 \) (weak positive correlation)
- Barriers Domain: \ (r = 0.228 \) (weak positive correlation)

2. Non-judging:

- Vocational Identity Domain: \ (r = 0.421 \) (moderate positive correlation)
- Occupational Information Domain: \ (r = 0.202 \) (weak positive correlation)
- Barriers Domain: \ (r = 0.178 \) (weak positive correlation)

3. Observing:

- Vocational Identity Domain: $(r = -0.093)$ (weak negative correlation)
- Occupational Information Domain: $(r = 0.066)$ (weak positive correlation)
- Barriers Domain: $(r = -0.140)$ (weak negative correlation)

4. Describing:

- Vocational Identity Domain: $(r = -0.132)$ (weak negative correlation)
- Occupational Information Domain: $(r = 0.031)$ (very weak positive correlation)
- Barriers Domain: $(r = -0.075)$ (weak negative correlation)

5. Non-reactivity:

- Vocational Identity Domain: $(r = -0.106)$ (weak negative correlation)
- Occupational Information Domain: $(r = 0.012)$ (very weak positive correlation)
- Barriers Domain: $(r = -0.124)$ (weak negative correlation)

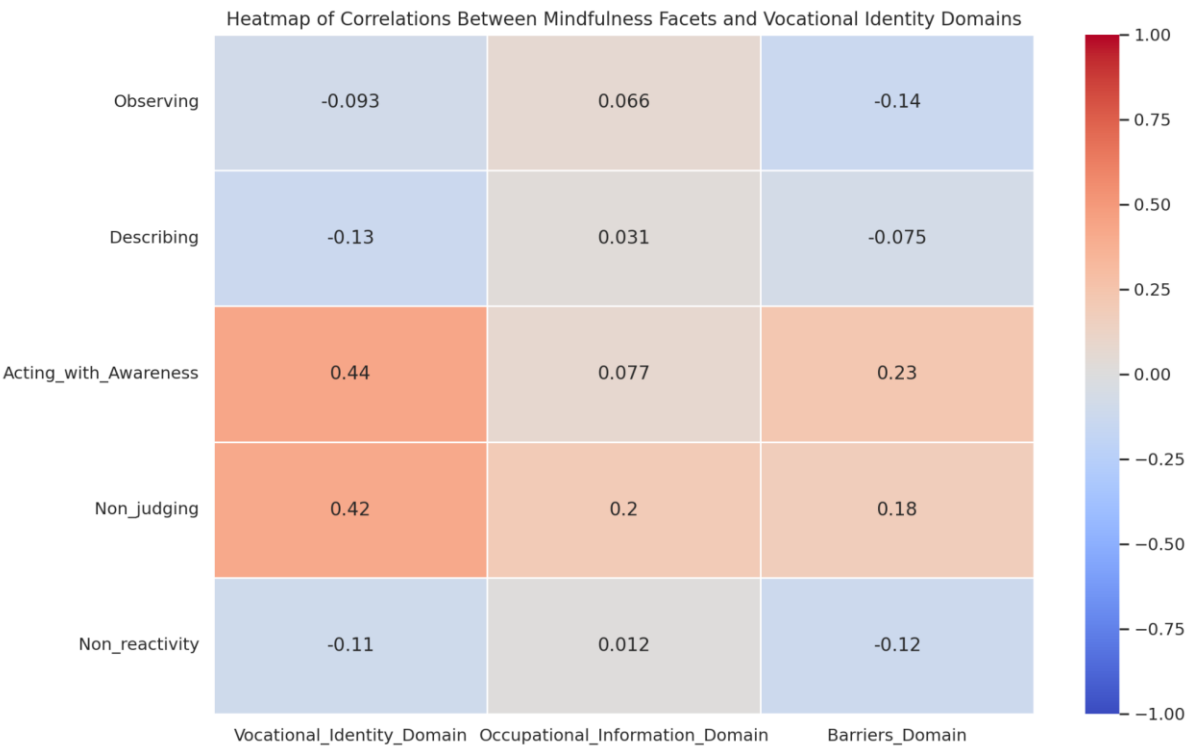
Hypothesis Testing:

Hypothesis 2: There will be positive correlations between each facet of mindfulness and specific domains of vocational identity.

1. Acting with Awareness and Non-judging have moderate positive correlations with the Vocational Identity Domain, supporting the hypothesis.
2. Acting with Awareness has weak positive correlations with the Occupational Information Domain and Barriers Domain, partially supporting the hypothesis.
3. Non-judging has weak positive correlations with the Occupational Information Domain and Barriers Domain, partially supporting the hypothesis.
4. Observing, Describing, and Non-reactivity show mostly weak negative or very weak positive correlations, which do not support the hypothesis.

The hypothesis is **partially accepted**. While there are positive correlations for certain facets of mindfulness (Acting with Awareness and Non-judging) with specific domains of vocational identity, the correlations for other facets (Observing, Describing, Non-reactivity) are weak and not consistently positive.

Table 1: Heatmap of correlations between Mindfulness and Vocational Identity Domains



Description: The heatmap confirms that the hypothesis is **partially accepted**, with certain facets of mindfulness (Acting with Awareness and Non-judging) showing positive correlations with specific domains of vocational identity. Other facets do not consistently support the hypothesis.

The heatmap above illustrates the correlations between each facet of mindfulness and each domain of vocational identity:

- Acting with Awareness and Non-judging show moderate positive correlations with the Vocational Identity Domain.
- Acting with Awareness and Non-judging have weak positive correlations with the Occupational Information and Barriers Domains.
- Observing, Describing, and Non-reactivity exhibit weak negative or very weak positive correlations, indicating no significant positive relationship.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to explore the relationship between mindfulness and vocational identity among a sample of 209 participants. The findings revealed a weak positive correlation between overall mindfulness and vocational identity, which was statistically significant, $(r(208) = 0.25, p < 0.05)$. This suggests that higher levels of mindfulness are associated with higher vocational identity scores.

Further analysis of the facets of mindfulness and specific domains of vocational identity yielded more nuanced results. Among the facets of mindfulness, "Acting with Awareness" and "Non-judging" demonstrated moderate positive correlations with the "Vocational Identity Domain," $(r = 0.435)$ and $(r = 0.421)$ respectively, indicating a meaningful relationship. However, other facets such as "Observing," "Describing," and "Non-reactivity" showed weak correlations with various domains of vocational identity, suggesting limited relationships.

Limitations:

1. **Sample Size and Diversity:** While the sample size of 209 is adequate for statistical analysis, the study's generalizability is limited by the homogeneity of the sample. Future research should include a more diverse population to enhance generalizability.
2. **Self-Report Measures:** The study relied on self-report questionnaires, which may introduce response biases. Participants may have provided socially desirable responses or may not have accurately assessed their own mindfulness and vocational identity.
3. **Cross-Sectional Design:** The cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to infer causality. Longitudinal studies are needed to establish temporal relationships between mindfulness and vocational identity.
4. **Limited Scope of Vocational Identity Domains:** The study focused on specific domains of vocational identity, which may not encompass all aspects relevant to vocational development. Future research should consider additional facets and broader measures of vocational identity.

The study confirmed a weak but significant positive correlation between overall mindfulness and vocational identity, supporting the notion that mindfulness may play a role in vocational development. "Acting with Awareness" and "Non-judging" are particularly relevant facets that positively correlate with vocational identity. These facets may be critical targets for interventions aimed at enhancing vocational identity. Mindfulness-based interventions could potentially be integrated into career counseling and development programs to support individuals in strengthening their vocational identity. Future studies should address the limitations by including diverse populations, employing longitudinal designs, and using more comprehensive measures. Exploring the causal mechanisms underlying the relationship between mindfulness and vocational identity would also be valuable.

In conclusion, while the study provides initial evidence for the positive relationship between mindfulness and vocational identity, further research is necessary to deepen our understanding and to establish robust, generalizable findings.

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