

Original Article (Quantified)

Model Validation for Mitigating Job Plateauing among Human Resources Personnel in a Water and Wastewater Company

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Receive:

17 April 2026

Revise:

19 May 2026

Accept:

10 June 2026

Keywords:

Career Plateauing,
Management Style,
Creativity and
Innovation,
General Health,
Employee
Empowerment

Abstract

The present study aims to validate the model for mitigating the career plateauing of human resources in the Water and Wastewater Company. In terms of its purpose, the research is fundamental; regarding its paradigm, it is positivist; in terms of implementation, it is quantitative; and in terms of data collection, it is descriptive-survey. The statistical population of the study consists of 800 managers and experts of the Water and Wastewater Company of Sistan and Baluchestan Province, selected through simple random sampling. Cochran's formula was utilized to determine the sample size for distributing the final questionnaire, resulting in a statistical sample of 262 individuals. Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire, the validity and reliability of which were verified. SPSS and PLS software were employed for data analysis. The results of the factor loading analysis indicate that all items of the socio-environmental dimension had factor loadings above 0.7, effectively measuring each component. Furthermore, the t-statistic for all dimensions of mitigating human resource career plateauing was greater than 1.96. This demonstrates that all dimensions of mitigating human resource career plateauing (individual, organizational, occupational, and socio-environmental factors) are in a favorable state.

Please cite this article as (APA): Sargolzaei, F, Aramesh, H and Yaghoubi, N M. (2026). Model Validation for Mitigating Job Plateauing among Human Resources Personnel in a Water and Wastewater Company. *Management and Educational Perspective*, 8(2), 298-319.



<https://doi.org/10.22034/jmep.2026.582180.1658>



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Publisher: Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

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**Extended Abstract****Introduction**

With the flattening of organizational structures, career advancement in terms of competitive vertical promotion has recently become difficult. Consequently, most employees often reach a career plateau before achieving their career goals. Career plateau is not a new phenomenon; however, the concerning issue is the speed of its prevalence in many organizations (Salami, 2020). Many managers of organizations and corporate systems have become aware that their most important asset is human resources, which is considered a highly effective indicator in the path of an organization's progress and success, and no organization or company will be able to achieve its goals without considering these resources (Jalil Tahmasbi, 2021).

Organizations are constantly seeking effective solutions for managing the career paths of their employees (Karimi Manjarmooi, 2020). On the other hand, new organizational structures are rapidly changing, and in addition to the increasing complexity of interpersonal relationships, career paths have also undergone changes (Karim Dadi, 2021). It can be said that the prevalence of downsizing and organizational restructuring in today's environment of organizations and companies, which seeks to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and maintain an acceptable level of profitability for shareholders by carrying out human resource reduction activities, has led to a decrease in management levels and, consequently, fewer opportunities for employee promotion and advancement. Furthermore, organizational structures have become flatter, and this uniformity means that individuals, due to less vertical mobility, are likely to remain in their current positions for a long time (Eghbalfar, 2017). Most people agree that the most frustrating and demotivating work experience is getting stuck in a job or having one's career advancement path blocked. This experience is defined as a stage that some individuals encounter when the probability of future promotion is unlikely. Individuals experiencing a career plateau generally report unfavorable emotional consequences such as lower job satisfaction and sense of well-being, as well as adverse work outcomes related to lower job performance, organizational commitment, and a greater intention to leave (Yang et al., 2023). The career plateau perceived by employees has become a source of increasing concern for organizations (Jing et al., 2022). Therefore, considering what has been stated, the main question of the present research is: What is the validation of the model for mitigating human resource career plateauing in the Water and Wastewater Company?

Theoretical Framework**Career Plateau**

Career plateauing refers to a point in an individual's organizational career at which further job advancement or promotion becomes impossible. It is a relatively longstanding concept that has been examined by various researchers. Different types of career plateauing have been identified. First, a distinction can be made between two levels of career plateauing: structural plateauing (hierarchical plateauing) and content plateauing (Huaman & Lahlouh, 2022).

Ghasemi Zargar et al. (2025) examined the antecedents and consequences affecting career plateauing among school employees in Tehran. The results indicated that the occurrence of career plateauing in schools involves 11 influential factors, including school policies and the education system, ineffective management, inappropriate reward and promotion systems, undesirable evaluation systems, unhealthy interactions among colleagues, lack of organizational dynamism, financial issues, inappropriate structures and regulations, individual characteristics, socio-economic conditions, job characteristics, and individual consequences. It was concluded that reducing career plateauing requires focused attention on these factors.

Hurst et al. (2024) investigated stress, organizational citizenship behaviors, and coping by comparing plateaued employees with non-plateaued (normal) employees. The findings

indicate that structural plateauing creates stressful conditions for employees, and the stress and its adverse effects are greater than those associated with content plateauing. The study also found a negative relationship between content career plateauing and time-related organizational citizenship behaviors. Furthermore, a negative relationship between career plateauing and job performance was reported.

Research Methodology

In terms of its purpose, this study is fundamental; based on the positivist paradigm, quantitative in its implementation, and descriptive-survey in its data collection method. The statistical population of the research consists of 800 managers and experts from the Sistan and Baluchestan Province Water and Wastewater Company, selected by simple random sampling. Cochran's formula was utilized to determine the sample size for the distribution of the final questionnaire, resulting in a statistical sample of 262 individuals. Data collection was conducted by a structured questionnaire, the validity and reliability of which have been verified.

Research Findings

SPSS and PLS software were utilized for data analysis. The results of the factor loading analysis indicate that all items in the socio-environmental dimension had factor loadings above 0.7 and measured each component well. In addition, the t-statistic for all dimensions of reducing human resource career plateauing was greater than 1.96. This indicates that all dimensions of reducing human resource career plateauing—individual, organizational, occupational, and socio-environmental factors—were in a favorable condition.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of validating the model for mitigating human resource career plateauing in the Water and Wastewater Company. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of Ghasemi Zargar et al. (2025), Hurst et al. (2024), Penker & Agrawal (2024), Najm al-Dini (2023), Darling & Cunningham (2023), Kwon (2022), Paryar et al. (2022), Farjam et al. (2022), and Mehraban (2021). Ghasemi Zargar et al. (2025) demonstrated that the occurrence of career plateauing in schools involves 11 influential factors, including school policies and the education system, ineffective management, inappropriate reward and promotion systems, undesirable evaluation systems, unhealthy interactions among colleagues, lack of organizational dynamism, financial issues, inappropriate structures and regulations, individual characteristics, socio-economic conditions, job characteristics, and individual consequences, which must be focused on to mitigate career plateauing.

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- It is recommended that a precise design be developed for evaluation indicators regarding the progress of human resource career plateauing mitigation, with the goal of obtaining feedback and modifying relevant policies and executive processes. Furthermore, training opportunities should be identified to reduce career plateauing, and appropriate tools and equipment should be utilized in this area.
- It is suggested that policymakers increase employees' understanding of career plateauing mitigation and the measures they can take to reduce organizational career plateauing by organizing training workshops and utilizing the experiences of other successful organizations or countries.