

**The Effect of Psychological
Well-being on Career Plateau:**
Field Research in the State Company for
Agricultural Supplies in Baghdad

تأثير الرفاهية النفسية في الهضبة الوظيفية
بحث ميداني في الشركة العامة للتجهيزات الزراعية في بغداد

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Abstract

The research aims to identify the extent of the impact of psychological well-being on career plateau. The research problem begins with a main question, which is to what extent psychological well-being affects career plateau. To verify the research question and its goal, the research relied on the descriptive analytical approach to study the relationship between the two variables: the independent variable represented by psychological well-being and its six dimensions, and the dependent variable represented by career plateau and its three dimensions.

The research adopted the questionnaire as a basic tool, which was distributed to a sample of 130 individuals working at the state company for agricultural supplies in Baghdad, one of the companies of the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. 127 of them were valid for statistical analysis on the SPSS. V23 program through its tools: the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and determination. The research reached a set of conclusions, the most prominent of which was the presence of an effect of psychological well-being on career plateau.

Keywords: Psychological Well-Being, Mental Health, Career Plateau, Job Stability, Career Path, Public Sector

الملخص

يهدف البحث التعرف على مدى تأثير الرفاهية النفسية على الهضبة الوظيفية الوظيفي. اذ تنطلق مشكلة البحث من تساؤل رئيسي وهو إلى أي مدى تؤثر الرفاهية النفسية على الهضبة الوظيفية. وللتحقق من تساؤل البحث وهدفه اعتمد البحث على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لدراسة العلاقة بين المتغيرين المتغير المستقل المتمثل بالرفاهية النفسية وابعادها الستة والمتغير التابعة المتمثل بالهضبة الوظيفية وابعادها الثلاثة. اذا اعتمد البحث الاستبانة كأداة اساسية والتي وزعت على عينة من 130 فرداً يعملون في الشركة العامة للتجهيزات الزراعية في بغداد احدى شركات وزارة الزراعة العراقية وكانت ١٢٧ استبانة منها صالحة للتحليل الاحصائي على برنامج (SPSS.v23) من خلال ادواته الوسط الحسابي والانحراف المعياري ومعامل الاختلاف والتحديد. وتوصل البحث إلى مجموعة من الاستنتاجات كان أبرزها وجود تأثير للرفاهية النفسية على الهضبة الوظيفية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرفاهية النفسية، الصحة النفسية، الهضبة الوظيفية، الثبات الوظيفي، المسار الوظيفي، القطاع العام

Introduction

From an administrative perspective, there is a very important matter to which organizations must pay attention to ensure the progress of work in the best possible way, which is the psychological well-being of working individuals because neglecting it not only affects their personal lives but also affects their career path and thus their performance.

In today's dynamic organizational settings, there has been a notable surge in interest in the idea of a career plateau. The concept of the career plateau appeared and received the necessary attention in the seventies, which means that the individual has reached a stage in which he cannot develop his career path upward, which means that there is no opportunity for advancement and promotion for him in the organization. While the career plateau has been studied across various contexts, its implications for professionals in the administration field remain particularly relevant (Yang, 2019).

A career plateau is a point in a person's career where there is little room for advancement and little complexity in the work (Jiang & Probst, 2013). Because it directly affects employees' motivation and job satisfaction, and thus their performance in general, it has serious effects on both employees and organizations.

Psychological well-being includes a group of dimensions that collectively affect the mental state of individuals (Diener et al., 2010). Positive effects, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose in life are some of its constituents.

Individuals' overall functioning is greatly influenced by their psychological well-being, which has been linked to enhance physical health outcomes, increased subjective well-being, and better work performance (Keyes et al., 2002).

The current research seeks to clarify the nature of the relationship between psychological well-being and career plateau, and more specifically, the effect of psychological well-being on career plateau in the public administration sector in particular.

1.1 Literature Review

Many studies have dealt with psychological well-being, career plateau, or both, and some of these studies will be reviewed in this section.

Psychological well-being, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social aspects, refers to a state of positive functioning and satisfaction with life. On the administrative side, this can be represented by job satisfaction, flexibility, passion, and a sense of purpose (Keyes, 2002).

The research has confirmed that psychological well-being has an impact on job satisfaction, the development of career goals, and multiple career paths. This ultimately affects the mental health of workers in their various specializations (Rahim, 2020; Rahim & Siti-Rohaida, 2015).

Here the researcher notes the mediation of psychological well-being between psychological capital and organizational commitment, which indicates the importance of psychological well-being in the organizational environment (Hu et al., 2022).

A career plateau appears, is represented by a lack of career advancement, and continues to stabilize because promotions in the workplace are halted, educational opportunities are weak, or the individual feels that his goals are not being achieved within the organization. This includes, routine and repetitive tasks, weak leadership opportunities, or creating a feeling after the correct employment of the individual (Hall, 1976).

It was discovered that job plateau significantly reduces the opportunities for acquiring knowledge and the fear of job security among employees, which ultimately harms the psychological well-being of employees (Su, 2021). Studies have indicated that a significant proportion of employees perceive themselves to be experiencing a career plateau, suggesting that this phenomenon will eventually impact most employees (Kwon, 2022).

In the same context, some studies have examined the relationship between psychological well-being and career plateau. It was found (Hossain, 2018) that there was a clear impact in the work life of psychological well-being on job satisfaction, commitment, and work turnover, as it is possible to address the negative effects of the career plateau at the organizational and individual levels by developing strategies for psychological well-being that maintain the psychological integrity of workers.

According to Lin et al. (2018), a career plateau is defined as a temporary or permanent cessation of career advancement. It has been associated with psychological exhaustion as well as feelings of frustration and incapacity. It was found that working women who enjoy organizational

support from management have higher levels of psychological health.

Women who reported more supportive organizational experiences and practices were found to have higher levels of psychological well-being (Burke et al., 2006). This indicates that the effect of psychological well-being on functional plateau extends to differences between males and females, as it was found that the epidemic had an impact on the training of doctors and the difficulties they faced regarding their mental health (Abbas et al., 2020). Studies comparing productivity, research, and psychological well-being by gender and career status have highlighted the impact of outside factors on psychological well-being and career plateaus, with the COVID-19 pandemic having done so (White et al., 2022).

2. Material and Methods

The main goal of this research is to identify the extent to which psychological well-being affects career plateaus. To achieve this goal, the descriptive analysis method was used. The research relied on the ready-made statistical program (SPSS.V.23) to analyze its data. The research also made use of several significant descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, coefficient of variation, and simple regression coefficients.

2.1 Research Tools

The questionnaire was the primary tool used in the current study to collect data on the practical aspect. The standards used in previous studies on the subject of the current study were then adjusted to fit the specifics of the company being studied. This allowed for the creation of a questionnaire. Table 1 lists the variables that were addressed in the survey, along with the measures that were used.

Table 1
The Structure of the Questionnaire

Variables	Paragraphs	Scales
Psychological well-being	1-18	(Ryff, 2013)
career plateau	19-33	(Zhu & Li 2023)

Source: by the researcher

2.2 The hypothetical scheme of the research

The nature of the relationship and influence between the research variables is tested by the fictitious research outline. As the first variable, psychological well-being has six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. The second one is the career plateau, which is the dependent variable and has three dimensions: the hierarchical plateau, the content plateau, and the centralized plateau, as illustrated in Figure 1.

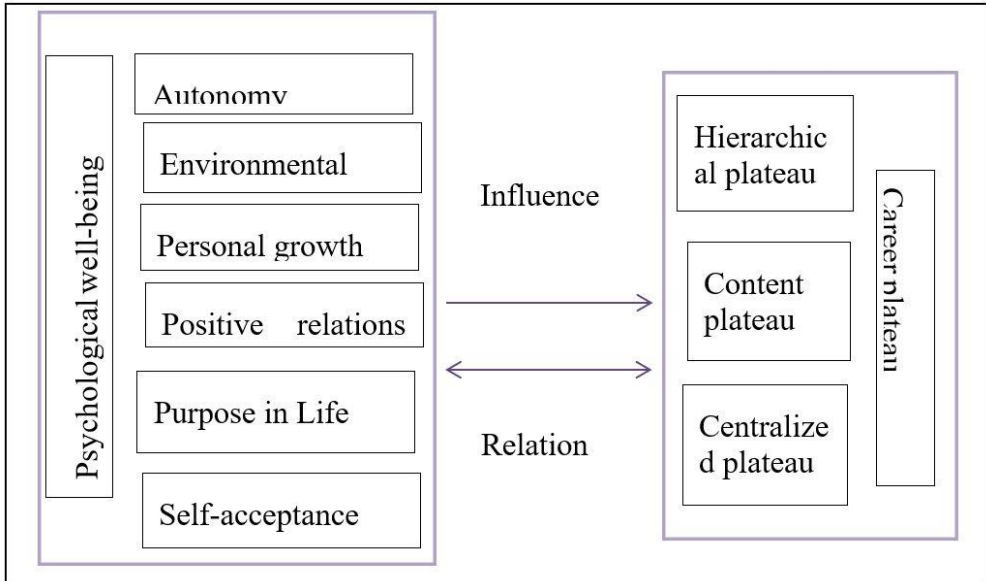


Figure 1

Hypothetical scheme of this research

2.3 The research hypotheses

The research included the following two hypotheses about the reality of the company under study:

H1. There is a statistically significant correlation between psychological well-being and its dimensions on the career plateau and dimensions combined in the state company for agricultural supplies in Baghdad.

H2. There is a statistically significant effect of psychological well-being and its dimensions on the career plateau and its dimensions combined in the state company for agricultural supplies in Baghdad.

2.4 The research sample and population

The research community was represented by individuals working at the state company for agricultural supplies in

Baghdad, which is one of the companies affiliated with the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. Random sampling was adopted as a means of selecting the research sample. The sample included 130 individuals to whom the questionnaire was distributed, out of 397 employees, and 127 valid questionnaires were received for statistical analysis.

2.5 The concept of psychological well-being

There are many different perspectives on psychological well-being, and each one offers insightful information about this complex idea. Humanistic psychologists like Maslow, Rogers, and Fromm, who developed theories and methods about people's well-being, are responsible for one viewpoint. Their points of view emphasize the importance of positive relationships with others, environmental control, self-acceptance, personal growth, and life purpose as essential components of well-being. These humanistic theories of flourishing have also been supported empirically by findings made by positive psychologists (Gómez-López & Ortega-Ruiz, 2019).

Another viewpoint arises from Positive psychology studies positive subjective experiences, individual traits, and institutional factors to improve the quality of life. It is the scientific study of what makes life most fulfilling. It highlights that regular positive emotions, infrequent negative emotions, and cognitive assessments like life satisfaction are essential elements of well-being. According to this perspective, mental health is made up of three different components: psychological, social, and hedonic (or subjective or emotional) well-being (Hasan, et al. 2023)

2.6 The dimensions of Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being consists of many dimensions related to individual flexibility, mental health, and life satisfaction. Researchers have developed many scales to verify these dimensions. One of the most important of these scales is what Carol Ryff presented to measure psychological well-being, which in turn included six basic dimensions, the most important models that were presented and tested about psychological well-being.

2.6.1 Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the authority that administrators have inside an organization to decide on their own and to direct their behavior. Administrators who enjoy autonomy can use judgment, show initiative, and take responsibility for their actions (Yildiz, 2023).

2.6.2 Environmental mastery

Environmental mastery is the capacity of administrators to comprehend and navigate their surroundings to manage their organizations effectively. It consists of a different set of abilities and experiences that help a person adapt to the environmental changes that occur in their external environment and enable them to take proactive measures (Chang, 2020).

2.6.3 Personal growth

It is defined as the continual process of personal growth and development, a growth-oriented mindset, goal-setting, and self-awareness are essential components of personal development. Self-awareness helps individuals know their responsibilities and duties, which enables them to make future decisions related to their career advancement (Wu,

2023). Furthermore, it takes a growth mindset to embrace challenges and keep getting better. This mindset is the conviction that one can improve one's abilities through commitment and diligence. By setting concrete and realistic goals and working to achieve them, individuals can chart a clear path for personal development (Hasan & Ibrahim, 2024).

2.6.4 Positive relations with others

It refers to building warm, satisfying, and trusting relationships that are essential for well-being. Individuals with strong empathy, affection, and intimacy tend to experience higher levels of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

2.6.5 Purpose in Life

It is related to a person's perception of significance, direction, and meaning. It encompasses a deeper comprehension of one's existence and the influence they can have on others; it goes beyond simple survival or routine tasks (Steger, 2013).

2.6.6 Self-acceptance

It describes "an individual's positive regard for their whole self, including their strengths, weaknesses, and flaws". It means "accepting one's flaws and limitations while also recognizing one's abilities and achievements. This concept differs from the concept of self-esteem, which refers to concern for an individual's values and opinions about himself" (Voci, et al., 2019).

2.7 The concept of career plateau

A career plateau can be defined as a stage in one's career where upward mobility becomes limited due to structural or personal factors (Arslan & Bayraktar-Uyar, 2020). It typically occurs when an employee reaches a point where there are fewer opportunities for promotion or advancement within the current organization (Khalaf & Musaib, 2022). So when someone reaches a certain point in their career, there aren't many chances for them to advance further. This is known as a career plateau. In this scenario, there is little opportunity to advance in one's career either vertically or horizontally, and there are few opportunities to take on new challenges and responsibilities (Bai, et al, 2023).

2.7.1 The dimensions of career plateau

Previous studies presented multiple dimensions to measure career plateau, including the absence of opportunities to advance upward within an organization, the absence of difficult tasks or the weakness of available training opportunities, and the lack of diversity in work, which causes boredom (Greenhaus et al., 1990). In the current research, the researcher relied on the model presented by Zhu & Li (2023), which consists of three dimensions:

2.7.2 Hierarchical plateau

A hierarchical plateau refers to a phenomenon in administration where people become stagnant in their ability to advance in their careers or grow personally after reaching a certain level in the organizational hierarchy (Arthur, et al. 2005). This is because of things like scarce prospects for advancement, a dearth of programs for skill development, or

job saturation in their current role. This administrative phenomenon is explained by several theories and models. The Peter Principle, for instance, contends that workers are frequently elevated to the point of their incompetence, which prevents them from continuing to function at higher levels. Maslow's ladder of needs theory indicates that teams' drive to achieve further progress in the organization may be weakened if their basic needs, such as financial stability and job security, are not met (Xie & Bai, 2016).

2.7.3 Content plateau

This refers to a circumstance in which people or organizations reach a point at which they are unable to significantly improve their performance, knowledge, or skills. It might be viewed as a condition of stagnation, in which advancement slows down and prospects for advancement are limited. This means that officials must fully understand the job content to identify the most important obstacles that affect the success of the organization and the career development of individuals. (Huaman-Ramirez & Lahlouh, 2023). Various factors can lead to content plateaus. One of the most important of these indicators is self-satisfaction, which comes as a result of individuals or organizations stopping their search to improve their situation because they are satisfied with the current situation, in addition to the lack of challenges or the lack of conditions for growth and learning (Yunusa & Usman, 2023).

2.7.4 Centralized plateau

It refers to a style of administrative structure in which the highest level of management has the majority of power and decision-making authority. In the field of management, this idea is considered sensitive because it directly affects the

effectiveness of the organization and its organizational efficiency, as well as its structure. (Spreitzer, 1995). This plateau occurs because of the basic limitations in the central structure, which become an obstacle to flexibility and creativity at the operational levels due to the centralization of decision-making and the distribution of resources (Galbraith, 2008).

2.8 The practical aspect of the research

2.8.1 Measure variables

In this section, the researcher reviews the results of using a group of various statistical methods and standards in the data analysis process, represented by weighted means, standard deviations, relative importance, T-TEST and F-TEST tests, and multiple linear regression analysis using the ready-made statistics program SPSS.

2.8.2 Descriptive Statistics for the independent variable psychological well-being

Table (2) shows that the value of the weighted arithmetic mean for psychological well-being as the independent variable was recorded (3.47), which is greater than the value of the hypothesized mean, which indicates that the direction of the research sample's answers regarding psychological well-being tended towards agreement, and the value of the standard deviation for psychological well-being within the category stabilized between (3.4 - 4.2) in the response strength matrix. This indicates that the level of response to most of the psychological well-being items was at a high level, with a standard deviation for the independent variable of (0.809).

This shows the extent of homogeneity of the research sample’s answers regarding the variable items while it recorded the relative importance of the independent variable (78.06%) showing the agreement of most members of the research sample on the psychological well-being items. Accordingly it is concluded that the company employees in the researched company significantly possess psychological well-being in its six dimensions (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance), but interest was in varying proportions.

Table 3

Arithmetic means and standard deviation of the psychological well-being variable

The relative importance	Std. Deviation	Weighted Mean	Dimensions		code
81.03%	0.788	3.76	Autonomy	Dimensions of the independent variable	X1
67.60%	0.872	083.	Environmental mastery		X2
82.2%	0.789	3.42	Personal growth		X3
65.54%	0.774	673.	Positive relations with others		X4
88.92%	0.834	3.59	Purpose in Life		X5
83.11%	0.801	3.32	Self-acceptance		X6
78.06%	0.809	3.47	Psychological well-being	independent variable	X

2.8.3 Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent Variable Career Plateau

Table (3) shows that the value of the weighted arithmetic mean for the career plateau as the dependent variable was 3.41, which is greater than the value of the hypothesized mean, representing the limit between agreement and disagreement.

The trend of the research sample's answers regarding this variable was towards an agreement. Additionally, the value of the weighted arithmetic mean for the functional plateau within the category stabilized between 3.4 and 4.2 in the response strength matrix, indicating that the level of response on most of the items of the variable was at a high level. The standard deviation for the dependent variable is 0.817, demonstrating the extent of homogeneity.

The research sample's answers regarding the variable items were recorded, while the relative importance of the dependent variable was (80.18%), indicating the agreement of most members of the research sample on the functional plateau items. From this, we conclude that the researched company encompasses this variable in its three dimensions, represented by hierarchical plateau, content plateau, and centralized plateau, albeit in varying proportions. This is a concerning indicator, signifying an increasing need for continuous monitoring by the company's management of this variable due to its potential danger to employees, and efforts should be made to address it.

Table 3

Arithmetic means and standard deviation of the research variables

The relative importance	Std. Deviation	Weighted Mean	dimensions		code
80.03%	0.783	3.10	Hierarchical plateau	Dimensions of the dependent variable	Y1
78.2%	0.891	3.64	Content plateau		Y2
82.31%	0.778	3.49	Centralized plateau		Y3
80.18	0.817	3.41	career plateau	dependent variable	Y

Source: made by the researcher based on (SPSS v23) outputs.

2.8.4 Testing the Research Hypotheses

2.8.4.1 Testing the first main hypothesis

Table 4 indicates that the correlation coefficient between psychological well-being and career plateau reached (0.656**) at a significance level of (0.000), which is lower than the significance level of (0.05). Therefore, the first hypothesis, asserting that there is a statistically significant correlation between psychological well-being and its dimensions of career plateau, both individually and combined, in the company under study, is accepted. This is due to the moderate direct correlation detected between them.

Table 4

The Correlation between research variables

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Correlation value	Level of significance
Psychological well-being	career plateau	0.656**	0.000

Source: made by the researcher based on (SPSS v23) outputs.

2.8.4.2 Testing the second main hypothesis

Based on the data presented in Table 5, it was found that the coefficient of determination (R²) was 0.431, indicating that 43.1% of the changes in career plateaus can be attributed to psychological well-being. The remaining 56.9% can be attributed to other factors.

There is a notable difference between the tabulated (F) value of 3.49 and the calculated (F) value of 76.8% between psychological well-being and career plateau. At the significance level of (0.05), the significance of (F) was greater than (0.000). The second main hypothesis was accepted based on the value and significance of (F), indicating that psychological well-being and its dimensions have a statistically significant effect on the career plateau and its dimensions taken together in the company under study.

Table 5

The Effect of psychological well-being on a career plateau

Independet variable	Dependent variable	R	R ²	F value	Significance F	A	(B)	(T) value	T significance
Psychological well-being	career plateau	0.656	0.431	76.8	0.000	0.43	0.57	3.7	0.000

Source: made by the researcher, based on (SPSS v23) outputs.

3. Discussion of results

The research examines the impact of psychological well-being on the career plateau of the General Company for Agricultural Equipment in Baghdad. The results of the statistical analysis revealed that the employees of the company exhibit psychological well-being, with the six dimensions combined influencing career plateauing more significantly than if they were applied individually, indicating integration and interconnectedness. Furthermore, the research findings demonstrated a strong response from the sample towards the dimension of purpose in life, suggesting that the research participants value their life goals greatly, demonstrating clear perceptions through effective planning and balancing personal and career objectives.

This dimension ranked highest, while positive relationships with colleagues received the lowest value in dimensional order. Additionally, the results indicated interaction and response towards the dimensions of career plateau and emphasized the importance of this variable

among the research sample, indicating a perception of its significance and seriousness among the company's employees. Notably, if the 'Centralized Plateau' dimension ranked highest in the attention of the company's management among the career plateau dimensions, it suggests its greatest influence on the research sample, with the 'Content Plateau' dimension ranking third and last.

The results of testing the research hypotheses revealed a direct positive relationship between psychological well-being and functional plateau. Consequently, the first main hypothesis was accepted. Additionally, it was demonstrated that there exists a direct and positive relationship between psychological well-being and job plateau, leading to the acceptance of the second main hypothesis. This suggests that changes in psychological well-being, overall, can influence changes in the job plateau of workers in the researched company. These findings align with previous studies (Hossain, 2018; Abbas et al., 2020).

4. Conclusions

There is a fundamental and essential role for psychological well-being in the career plateau. Individuals can deal with the functional plateau according to their psychological well-being. The career plateau does not necessarily mean the end of the road, but rather it can be an incentive for the individual to advance in their professional life.

Although few studies have addressed the relationship between psychological well-being and career plateau, more of them must be conducted because of their significant impact on individuals in particular and organizations in general. If organizations can address the causes that affect the psychological well-being of their employees, this can help them overcome the career plateau.

The current research came to clarify the effect that psychological well-being has on a career plateau.

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