

Staff Nurses' Career Plateau and Its Influence on Their Work Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Context: Nowadays, due to volatile organizational structures and unstable circumstances, employees work in the same job for a long period. So, a career plateau will result in obstacles to promotion; the employee remains in the same position for a longer period, and the employee feels bored with the job. The plateaued employees have become less optimistic, very nervous, and highly stressed. Therefore, a career plateau is an antecedent for unwanted work outcomes, such as low job satisfaction, low career motivation, low self-efficacy, and low work engagement.

Aim: This study aimed to assess the career plateau perceived by staff nurses and its influence on their work engagement.

Methods: A descriptive correlational design was used to conduct this study at Heart and Specialized Surgery Hospital on one hundred and forty nursing staff. Data collection tools included Career Plateau Scale and Work Engagement Scale.

Results: Illustrate that most nursing staff (76.4%) had a high level of experience with hierarchical/structural plateau. Meanwhile, 35.8% had a high level of experience with maintenance plateau. Regarding the total level of career plateau, it was observed that 56.4% of nurses staff had a high level of experience with a total career plateau, and 26.4% of them had a moderate level. At the same time, 17.2% had a low level of total career plateau. Nursing staff distribution regarding work engagement dimensions indicates that the majority (91.6%) had a high level regarding the dedication dimension. In addition, 82.4% had a high level regarding the vigor dimension. At the same time, only 9.7% of them had a high level regarding absorption dimension. There was a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between nursing staff perception of Hierarchical/structural career plateau and their work absorption dimension at $r=0.55$, $p=0.001$. While there was a statistically significant negative correlation between nursing staff perception of career plateau and engagement dimensions at $r=-0.300$, p value <0.001 .

Conclusion: Indicates a statistically significant negative correlation between total nursing staff perception of career plateau and their total work engagement. The study recommended that nurse managers develop a clear road map for advancing the career of staff nurses to reduce the plateauing of careers, and implementation of career development programs should be proactive rather than reactive so that employees are better equipped to deal with career stagnation and boredom.

Keywords: Career plateau, work engagement, staff nurses

1. Introduction

Acute care hospitals are complex organizations with multiple providers, divided by specialization and training to deliver safe, quality care (Havens et al., 2018). People usually use new ways to serve their corporation as work flexibility, job sharing, and reduced work time program. Organizations are interested in success and use different methods to attain that success and keep employees engaged in their work efficiently. Arguably, people are the most important resource to any organization, making the most significant contribution to its success, so it is important to encourage them toward developing their careers which support their engagement toward the organization's business (Bakker, Demerouti, and Sanz-Vergel, 2014).

A career refers to an individual's chosen profession. It is also a framework that allows individuals to consider valuable job opportunities and how their work roles contribute to their broader life roles. Nowadays, careers are becoming a "patchwork" of jobs, and continuous upward opportunities are limited, which is not designed or anticipated by the

person leading to plateau phenomena (Rilovick, 2005). Career plateauing is a limited vertical and horizontal movement in an individual's job. The period of an employee's profession where the possibility of further upward movement is either considerably low or the challenge in the job comes to an end occurs when an individual has attained the highest position within an organization and has no prospect of being promoted (Lartey, 2021).

A career plateau may be caused by various reasons, such as reaching the highest possible level in the company, feeling restricted in a role, or no longer feeling challenged or engaged by work. People sometimes reach a plateau when they have mastered the job and no longer feel challenged or when their actions have damaged their reputation (Devi & Basariya, 2017).

Also, there are other causes of career plateau: lack of intrinsic motivation, lack of extrinsic rewards, stress, burnout, and slow organizational growth (Padma, 2016). So, the employees feel not challenged by the work and

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responsibilities, and there is no chance for advanced development or an inability to meet their career goals and plans (Donner & Wheeler, 2001).

Ramgoolam (2020) stated that career plateauing includes four dimensions; the first is the hierarchical/structural plateau, which is defined as the point in a career where the likelihood of additional hierarchical promotion is very low. Second, the job content plateau is the employee has learned everything about the job and experiences no further challenges. Third, the maintenance plateau is when an employee feels satisfied with the current job, and fourth, the psychological plateau is when the employee feels dissatisfied, disillusioned, and uninspired by the current job.

Many factors affecting career plateauing, such as changes in the work environment, organizational structure reengineering, downsizing of organizations, and turning to horizontal structures, all have caused career plateauing to become a management crisis, so efficient management of career plateauing has arisen through maintaining effective job performance and high job satisfaction despite a low likelihood of promotion (Padma, 2016).

Suppose the career plateau is due to organizational factors. In that case, the organization may not terminate any nurse. However, when nurses are not getting desired promotions, additional responsibilities, new opportunities, and competitive pay, it can result in job dissatisfaction and attrition from the organization, negatively affecting employee engagement. So, it is important to develop different strategies to deal with career plateau among nurses through developing new skills, revitalizing through reassignment, setting some short-term and long-term goals in their career, and timely evaluating their progress, encouraging willingness to progress via enhancing their technical skills and their work engagement (Field, 2020).

A plateaued nurse is a person whose career is at a stage with no likelihood of further hierarchical promotion (Ramgoolam, 2020). In a career plateau, nurses may feel that they can no longer realize their full potential and feel 'stuck' and unable to grow and change as the environment around them, including their organization, changes. This career plateau can reduce their motivation, engagement, and productivity (Lartey, 2021). Therefore, engaging nurses by using the onboarding process to raise awareness of the program and foster interaction encourage nurses to choose the required activities they can dive into immediately. Also, the organizations can engage nurses better by developing in-house education programs that help nurses advance and keeping ongoing progress effectively toward their professional careers through creating classes that prepare nurses for managerial duties or designing extended preceptorships for nurses who seek to move from one department to another which fosters a high degree of engagement and lead to improved nurse retention (Ghazawy et al., 2019).

Work engagement is the relationship between an organization and its employees, an "engaged employee" is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work and takes positive action to further the organization's reputation and

interests. Thus, work engagement is emotional experiences that act as a source of energy inherent in work engagement. Work engagement provides employees with better performance, better communication, and greater job satisfaction (Employee Engagement Strategies, 2018). There are different types of employee engagement: neither engaged nor committed employees, engaged employees, committed employees, and engaged and committed employees who help improve the productivity of the individual workforce (Duval, 2021).

Work engagement comprises three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor refers to energy, mental resilience, determination, and investing consistent effort in the job. Dedication refers to deriving a sense of significance from one's work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about one's job, and feeling inspired and challenged by it. Absorption refers to being totally and happily immersed in one's work and having difficulties detaching oneself from it (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014).

Nurses are more likely to take a job that fits their career to make forward movement in their organization; this will help employees enjoy their work and become more committed and engaged. They perform for personal fulfillment and follow their organizations' goals smoothly (Career Plateau, 2021).

In a highly competitive work where the rate of change has been accelerating, organizations increasingly rely on the strengths and talents of their staff nurses. Modern organizations that want to stay competitive need engaged staff nurses with high energy, dedication, and absorption levels. Engaged staff nurses have an abundance of "resources" which they can invest in their work. They are enthusiastic about their work, immersed in their activities, and persistent when facing challenges and hindrances (Zhu et al., 2021).

2. Significance of the study

An important issue that needs to be handled carefully by hospital administration management professionals is the stagnating employees who often refuse to budge and become overtaken by frustration. Also, the absence of opportunities for vertical advancement prevents hospital management from instilling encouragement. There are different strategies for dealing with the situation as evaluating the current jobs, encouraging employees to be organized in doing a job, and encouraging the employee to be engaged in their work effectively (Shakildevi et al., 2019).

A perceived career plateau shows the formation of negative attitudes such as decreased motivation for job performance, decreased job engagement, and elevated turnover intention. So, the relationship between career plateauing, work engagement, and work on a practical level among nurses can promote a better understanding of career plateauing, motivation, and work engagement. Relationships among these variables will guide the direction of career development practices and the content of career development programs in healthcare organizations. Also, work engagement can be a significant outcome of career

plateauing and an important tool for diagnosing problems individuals may encounter in their career development. This study is one of the studies that aimed to investigate the relationship between career plateauing and work engagement among nurses in an acute care hospital.

3. Aim of the study

This study aimed to assess the career plateau perceived by staff nurses and its influence on their work engagement through:

- Assessing career plateau as perceived by staff nurses.
- Assessing work engagement levels among staff nurses
- Finding out the influence of career plateau on work engagement among staff nurses.

3.1 Research question

Can career plateau influence the work engagement among staff nurses?

4. Subjects & Methods

4.1. Research Design

A descriptive correlational design was used to achieve the aim of this study. Descriptive studies are research intended to supply a picture of the current situation. Correlational studies are research designed to find out relations among variables and to allow the prediction of future events from present knowledge (Walinga, 2019).

4.2. Research setting

This study was conducted at all critical and non-critical care units in Heart and Specialized Surgery Hospital affiliated to Ain Shams University Hospitals. It provides care for adults and pediatric patients in cardio and chest surgeries in the following units (operating rooms, intensive care units, coronary care units, departments, and emergency units).

4.3. Subjects

The subjects of this study included a convenient sample of all available staff nurses working in the study setting. Their total number was (140).

4.4. Tools of data collection

Two tools were used for data collection: Career Plateau Scale and Work Engagement Scale.

4.4.1. Career Plateau Scale (CPS)

This scale aimed to assess career plateau as perceived by staff nurses. It was developed by Ramgoolam (2020) and was modified by the researchers. It is classified into two parts.

Part 1 is designed to gather socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, nursing qualifications, marital status, years of experience, working setting, duration since last promotion, and change in job and responsibility in the past three years.

Part 2 contains 20 items divided into four domains. They are hierarchical/structural plateau domain (5 statements), such

as “my opportunity for future promotion is limited.” The second domain is job content plateau (5 statements), such as “My job no longer challenges me.” The third domain is the maintenance plateau (5 statements) as “I enjoy performing my daily work activities,” and the fourth domain is the psychological plateau (5 statements) as “my interest in work has decreased.”

Scoring system

Nursing staff responses were measured on seven points Likert Scale ranging from not agree at all (scored 1), very slightly agree (scored 2), slightly agree (scored 3), moderately agree (scored 4), mostly agree (scored 5), strongly agree (scored 6), very strongly agree (scored 7). The subtotal for each domain and total responses were classified into the following levels: according to cut-off points: high level of career plateauing <75%, moderate level of career plateauing 60%-75%, and low level of career plateauing <60%.

4.4.2. Work Engagement Scale

It aimed at assessing the level of work engagement among staff nurses. This tool was developed by *Schaufeli and Bakker (2010)* and adopted by *Abdelkader (2017)*. It consisted of 17 statements divided into three dimensions. They are the vigor dimension (6 statements) as “at my work, I feel bursting with energy,” dedication dimension (5 statements) as “I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.” Absorption dimension (6 statements) as “time flies when I am working.”

Scoring system

Nursing staff responses were scored according to 5- a point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5; absolutely (scored 1); rarely (scored 2); sometimes (scored 3); often (scored 4); always (scored 5). The subtotal for each domain and total responses were classified into the following levels according to cut-off points: low if less than 60%, moderate if ranged from 60% to 75%, and high if more than 75%.

4.5. Procedures

Testing validity of the proposed tools by using face and content validity. Face validity is aimed at inspecting the items to determine whether the tools measure what they are supposed to measure. Content validity was conducted to determine whether the tools' content covered the study's aim. A jury of five experts specialized in nursing administration conducted content validity (One professor from the Faculty of Nursing, Ain shams University, two assistant professors from the Faculty of Nursing, Benha University, and two professors from the Faculty of Nursing, Helwan University. Cronbach Alpha was used to measure internal consistency. It was 0.928 for the career plateau scale and 0.93 for the work engagement scale.

Ethical considerations: Official permission to conduct the study was secured. The researchers clarified to staff nurses that participation was voluntary, and anonymity was assured. Approval of the hospital director has been taken first. Also, the head nurses and each staff nurse of the participating units determined a suitable time for data

collection. Informed verbal consent was taken from each participant. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time and notified that data were collected for scientific research only.

A pilot study was conducted on 14 staff nurses representing 10% of study subjects to examine the feasibility of the study process, practicability, and clarity of the study's tool. It was also used to estimate the time needed to fill the sheets, which ranged between 25-35 minutes. Staff nurses who participated in the pilot study were included in the primary study sample because no modification was required according to the pilot study.

The fieldwork: Data collection activities lasted one month from the beginning of January 2021 till the end of January 2021. The researchers introduced themselves to staff nurses and explained the purpose of the study to staff nurses who participated in the study. Data were collected two days per week in the presence of the researchers to explain any ambiguity. The method of filling out the sheet was explained before data collection. The researchers collected data by meeting staff nurses in groups at the workplace during work hours at different times.

4.7. Data analysis

Data entry and statistical analysis were done using SPSS 25.0 statistical software package. Data were presented using descriptive statistics for quantitative variables in frequencies, percentages, mean, median, and standard deviation. Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the reliability of the tools through their internal consistency. Mann-Whitney test was used to test whether two samples are likely to derive from the same population. Pearson coefficient was used to represent the relationship between two variables measured on the same interval or ratio scale. Statistical significance was considered at p -value <0.05 .

5. Results

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of studied staff nurses. As indicated in the table, 76% of nurses' ages ranged between 30- ≥ 40 years old, and most (93 %) were females. In addition, 76% had experienced years between 5- ≥ 10 . While only 20% of them changed their job and responsibility position in the past three years, with a mean of 0.56 ± 1.09 years since their last promotion.

Table 2 demonstrates the nursing staff's perception of their career plateau. Most nursing staff (76.4%) had a high level of experience with hierarchical/structural plateau. Meanwhile, 35.8% had a high level of experience with maintenance plateau.

Figure 1 represents the total level of career plateau among the staff nurses. It was observed that 56.4% of staff

nurses had a high perception of their total career plateau, 26.4% had a moderate level, and 17.2% had a low level.

Table 3 presents the nursing staff distribution regarding their work engagement dimensions. It indicates that the majority of them, 91.6% had a high level regarding the dedication dimension. In addition, 82.4% had a high level regarding the vigor dimension. At the same time, only 9.7% of them had a high level regarding absorption dimension.

Figure 2 illustrates the nursing staff distribution regarding their total levels of work engagement. It indicates that 61% had a high level of work engagement, 16% had a moderate level of work engagement, and 23% had a low level of work engagement.

Table 4 describes the relationship between career plateau and nurses' demographic characteristics. It shows that higher plateauing scores were among females, with a mean of 67.6 ± 6.1 compared to males, whose mean was 50.5 ± 14.6 . A higher plateauing score of nurses with a Baccalaureate degree of nursing with the highest mean of 87.5 ± 1.7 among other nursing qualifications, and higher plateauing scores of married nurses with a mean of 91.7 ± 8.5 . With non-statistically significant differences between all demographic characteristics and the career plateau total score. Additionally, there is a statistically significant difference between the career plateau of studied staff nurses and their years of experience. A non-statistically significant relationship was found between the work setting, change of job and responsibility position in the past three years, and the career plateau total score.

Table 5 describes the relationship between total work engagement score and staff nurses' demographic characteristics. It shows higher work engagement scores of females with a mean of 70.30 ± 7.32 compared to males (50.07 ± 10.33), with a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The higher work engagement scores of nurses were among the technical health institute nurses, with a mean of 59.50 ± 6.23 compared to the other nursing qualifications, and higher work engagement scores among single nurses, with a mean of 45.60 ± 10.03 with non-statistical significance differences.

Table 6 indicates there was a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between nursing staff perception of hierarchical/structural plateau and their work absorption at a p -value of 0.001 and a statistically significant negative correlation between the hierarchical/structural plateau and vigor and dedication dimensions of Work engagement at p -value at ($p = 0.001$).

Table 7 indicates a statistically significant negative correlation between total nursing staff perception of career plateau and their total work engagement at a p -value of 0.001.

Table (1): Frequency and percentage distribution of staff nurses' demographic characteristics (n=140).

Characteristics	No.	Percent
Age		
<30	9	6
30-≥40	106	76
40+	25	18
Mean±SD	27.45±6.93	
Gender		
Male	10	7
Female	130	93
Nursing qualification		
Diploma	88	63
Technical Health Institute	47	34
Bachelor	5	3
Marital status		
Single	33	24
Married	78	56
Widow	10	7
Divorce	19	13
Experience years		
<5	14	10
5 -≤10	106	76
10+	20	14
Mean±SD	6.38 ±5.61	
Work setting		
Operating rooms	36	25.5
ICU	44	31.4
CCU	19	13.5
Departments	16	11.4
Emergency unit	25	18.2
Duration since last promotion (Years)		
Mean±SD	0.56 ± 1.09	
Change job and responsibility position in the past three years		
Yes	28	20
No	112	80

Table (2): Frequency and percentage distribution of nursing staff perception regarding career plateau dimensions (N=140).

Career plateau Dimensions	Low level		Moderate level		High level	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Hierarchical/structural plateau	10	7.2	23	16.4	107	76.4
Job content plateau	22	15.7	34	24.3	84	60
Maintenance plateau	44	31.4	46	32.8	50	35.8
Psychological plateau	20	14.5	45	32	75	53.5

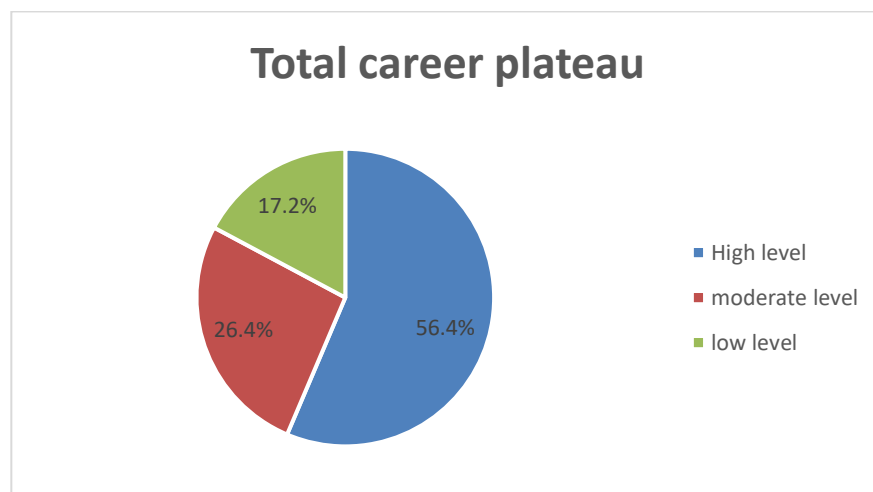
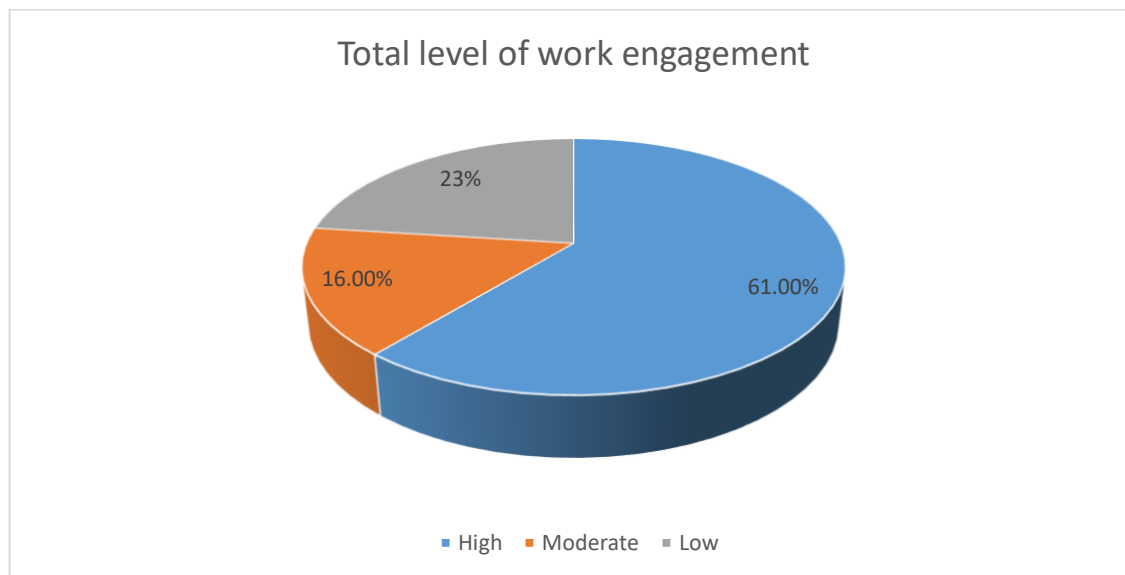
**Figure (1): Percentage distribution of nursing staff total levels of career plateau (n=140).**

Table (3): Frequency and percentage distribution of nurses' work engagement dimensions (n=140).

Dimensions of work engagement	Low level		Moderate level		High level	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Vigor dimension	8	5.8	16	11.6	116	82.4
Dedication dimension	6	3.9	7	4.5	127	91.6
Absorption dimension	81	58	45	32.3	14	9.7

**Figure (2): Percentage distribution of nursing staff total levels of work engagement (n=140).****Table (4): Relation between total career plateau and the staff nurses' demographic characteristics (n=140).**

Demographic characteristics	Mean±SD	Median	Mann Whitney test	p-value
Age				
<30	57.5 ±1.7	86.00	0.23	0.73
30-≥40	48.7±1.5	57.30		
40+	35.7±4.5	36.00		
Gender				
Male	50.5±14.6	93.35	0.39	0.64
Female	67.6±6.1	93.65		
Nursing qualifications				
Nursing Diploma	87.5 ±1.7	68.8	1.43	0.43
Technical health institute	41.7±8.5	83.6		
Nursing Bachelor	26.7±8.5	87.1		
Marital status				
Single	80.0±21.6	89.30	1.36	0.24
Married	91.7±8.5	94.00		
Widow	91.2±8.9	58.7		
Divorce	70.4±12.6	84.6		
Years of experience				
<5	91.6±11.9	94.00	0.12	0.05
5-≥10	91.2±8.9	93.30		
10+	71.4±9.6	59.63		
Work setting				
Operating rooms	88.9±12.1	92.00	0.05	0.82
ICU	90.9±3.4	94.00		
CCU	91.2±8.9	94.00		
departments	70.4±12.6	72.35		
Emergency unit	67.8±7.8	56.65		
Change job and responsibility position in the past three years:				
Yes	28.6±15.3	95.30	0.18	0.67
No	92.4±8.7	93.30		

6. Discussion

Plateau was a recent concept in work institutions. A career plateau occurs when an employee has reached the highest position level they can obtain within an organization and has no prospect of being promoted due to a lack of skills, corporate restructuring, or other factors. Career plateau is a major concern for many employees because they often stay in the same position longer than expected and, over time, begin to lack job challenges (Len & Chen, 2020). Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. In short, engaged staff nurses have high energy levels and are enthusiastic about their work (Bakker, 2017). The present study aimed to assess the career plateau perceived by staff nurses and its influence on their work engagement.

The present study reveals that most nursing staff highly perceive hierarchical/structural plateau. Meanwhile, about one-third of nurses perceive their maintenance plateau as high. From the researchers' point of view, a hierarchical/structural plateau occurs when the administrators or organization lacks available positions or confidence in the staff nurses' ability. These findings agreed with Len and Chen (2020), who studied "Experiencing career plateau on a committed career" and found that perceptions of hierarchical/structural plateauing were high. Badiane

(2016), in a study on career plateauing, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior of Taiwan-based expatriates, found that hierarchical plateauing becomes inevitable for employees when organizations downsize and restructure.

Regarding total levels of career plateau as perceived by staff nurses, it was found that more than half of the studied staff nurses had a high perception of career plateau. It might be due to staff nurses feeling restricted in their role or no longer feeling challenged or engaged by work. This study's findings are congruent with Hassan *et al.* (2020), who studied the effect of career plateau on head nurses' careers, job satisfaction, and turnover intention. They found that the total mean score of career plateau was high. Also, Su *et al.* (2017), who studied the effect of structural/content career plateaus on job involvement, assumed that the greater perception of career plateauing is high due to rapid technological development, social tendencies, and organizations engaged in restructuring, and downsizing is unavoidable.

Regarding the score of work engagement dimensions, the current study finding indicates that most studied staff nurses had high levels of dedication and vigor. From the researchers' point of view, this might be due to nurses feeling comfortable with their work conditions and being proud of their work.

Table 5: Relation between work engagement and staff nurses' demographic characteristics (n=140).

Demographic characteristics	Mean \pm SD	Median	Mann Whitney test	p-value
Age				
<30	36.51 \pm 10.03	37.80	1.66	0.75
30 \geq 40	38.93 \pm 11.41	39.70		
40+	37.71 \pm 5.30	38.30		
Gender				
Male	50.07 \pm 10.33	29.20	18.1	0.050
Female	70.30 \pm 7.32	37.20		
Nursing qualifications				
Nursing Diploma	37.21 \pm 8.03	39.20	0.811	0.23
Technical health institute	59.50 \pm 6.23	39.76		
Nursing Bachelor	42.81 \pm 5.37	41.30		
Marital status				
Single	45.60 \pm 10.03	32.20	0.612	0.24
Married	38.89 \pm 5.30	38.10		
Widow	37.92 \pm 6.31	27.61		
Divorce	24.77 \pm 5.71	38.53		
Experience years:				
<5	36.51 \pm 10.03	37.80	0.512	0.25
5 \geq 10	38.93 \pm 11.41	39.70		
10+	37.71 \pm 5.30	38.30		
Work setting				
Operating rooms	35.07 \pm 9.61	40.45	0.321	0.92
ICU	38.91 \pm 8.33	31.10		
CCU	37.92 \pm 6.31	38.10		
departments	24.77 \pm 5.71	27.61		
Emergency unit	34.92 \pm 5.31	38.53		
Change job and responsibility position in the past three years:				
Yes	37.54 \pm 6.48	38.73	0.18	0.67
No	37.69 \pm 5.30	41.10		

Table (6): Correlation between nursing staff career plateau and work engagement dimension (n=140).

Career plateau dimensions	p/r*	Work engagement dimensions		
		Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
Hierarchical/structural plateau	r	-0.289	-0.363	0.550
	p	0.001	0.001	0.001
Job content plateau	r	1.00	-0.088	0.022
	p	0.233	0.421	0.123
Maintenance plateau	r	1.00	-0.054	0.041
	p	0.233	0.421	0.123
Psychological plateau	r	1.00	-0.099	0.022
		0.537	0.214	0.126

*Pearson coefficient

Table (7): Correlation between nursing staff total career plateau and work engagement (n=140).

Total dimensions	p/r*	Total work engagement
Total career plateau	r	-0.300
	P	<0.001

*Pearson coefficient

These study findings are congruent with *Mokoka et al. (2010)*, who studied "Retaining professional nurses in South Africa: Nurse managers' perspectives," and indicated that study subjects had a high level of dedication, while this finding disagreed with *Abd Elkader (2017)*, who studied the relationship between quality of work life and work engagement among head nurses and found that the majority of participants had high level regarding the absorption dimension.

Regarding total levels of work engagement, the current study indicates that more than half of staff nurses had a high level of work engagement. From the researchers' point of view, this finding might be due to nurses' motivation, sharing in decision-making, and good communication among staff members. This result was incongruent with *Abd Elkader (2017)*, who revealed that more than half of staff nurses had low levels regarding total work engagement.

Also, this study finding disagreed with *Wan et al. (2018)*, who studied work engagement and its predictors in registered nurses and mentioned that most nurses had a low level of work engagement. Also, the current study finding is contrary to a study conducted by *Ozer et al. (2017)*, who studied the effect of organizational justice on work engagement in healthcare and found that the healthcare staff nurses had a moderate level of work engagement.

The relation between the total career plateau among studied staff nurses and their demographic characteristics demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between the career plateau of studied staff nurses and their years of experience. A non-statistically significant relationship was found between the work setting, change the job and responsibility position in the past three years, and the career plateau total score. From the researchers' point of view, this might be when staff nurses with more experience can overcome obstacles and challenges and increase their ability to openly discuss their feelings.

Relating total work engagement score and staff nurses' demographic characteristics. It shows higher work engagement scores of females, with a statistically significant

difference between males and females. Also, the higher work engagement scores of nurses were among the technical nurses compared to the other nursing qualifications and higher work engagement scores of single nurses with non-statistical significance difference. From the researchers' point of view, this might be due to the majority of females having the ability to accommodate and deal with flexibility with different environmental conditions.

This result disagreed with *Czerw and Grabowki (2015)*, who studied work attitudes and work ethics as predictors of work engagement among Polish staff nurses and found that age and years of experience affect work engagement. This result disagreed with *Jaworek (2017)*, who studied "The role of occupational and demographic factors in relation to work engagement in Polish sample of employees: Initial study" and found that women are slightly more engaged at work than men in terms of the total scores on work engagement and no gender differences were detected.

Regarding the correlation between nursing staff career plateau and work engagement dimensions, the result of the current study indicates a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between nursing staff perception of hierarchical/structural plateau and their work absorption and a statistically significant negative correlation between the hierarchical/structural plateau and vigor and dedication dimensions of work engagement. This finding might reflect the nurses' caring attitude, commitment, and happiness with what they do as a human job that was more important to them than hierarchal promotion. At the same time, it adversely affects their energy and mental resilience, sense of significance from their job, and enthusiasm. This result is congruent with *Hassan et al. (2020)*, who found a significant positive correlation between hierarchical plateau and absorption.

Regarding the correlation between nursing staff's total career plateau and total work engagement, the study findings indicate a statistically significant negative correlation between total nursing staff perception of career plateau and their total work engagement. This finding might be due to

the staff nurses being more loaded, frustrated, and unmotivated in their work and having no opportunities to be promoted. Similarly, *Hossain (2018)* studied the effects of perceived career plateau on work-related attitudes: A study on employees organizations found that career-plateaued workers have become dissatisfied and are not inspired to continue working harder because the efforts they put into their work in the company have not been appreciated and as such their work may not be of value to them, leading to disappointment, disinterest, discontent with their job and an intention to quit.

This finding agreed with *Ramgoolam (2020)*, who studied the development and validation of the career plateauing experiences scale about job satisfaction, motivation, and work engagement and found a statistically significant negative correlation between total nursing staff perception of career plateau and their total work engagement.

Also, *Lu and Wu (2014)* studied significant multiple regression algorithms of construction occupation based on micro-optical characteristics and matrix correlation degree. They found that career plateau had a negative effect on engagement.

7. Conclusion

In light of the current study findings, more than half of staff nurses had a high perception of career plateau. More than half of them had a high level of work engagement. Finally, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between the total nursing staff perception of career plateau and their total work engagement.

8. Recommendations

- Nurse managers should develop a clear road map for advancing the career of staff nurses to reduce the plateauing of careers.
- Implementation of career development programs should be proactive rather than reactive so that employees are better equipped to deal with career stagnation and boredom.
- Further research about predicting factors affecting work engagement and career plateau among staff nurses.

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