

# The impact of career plateaus on the workplace deviance of grassroots civil servants -Taking Xiangcheng District, Suzhou as an Example

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## Abstract

The phenomenon of career plateau is a matter of widespread concern and has been found by a large number of studies to have a negative impact on work behaviours. The negative behaviours of grassroots civil servants affected by career plateau have a potential negative impact on social development due to the special nature of their work. From the perspective of public service motivation, this study attempts to reveal the process mechanism by which career plateau affects work behaviours of grassroots civil servants and how to mitigate the negative impact of career plateau. This study used questionnaire data from 475 grass-roots civil servants, and the findings showed that: (1) career plateau is positively correlated with civil servants workplace deviance; heart privilege plays a mediating role in the above process; and (2) the mediating effect of heart privilege in the relationship between career plateau and workplace deviance will be moderated by public service motivation. The findings not only explain the process of the influence of career plateau on civil servants on-the-job behaviours, but also provide a basis for intervening in civil servants career plateau from the perspective of individual cognition.

## 1. Introduction

As an important group in Chinese society, the career development of civil servants is of great concern to all sectors of society. Among them, grassroots civil servants, who account for 60% of the main body of the civil service team, are the main force for the implementation of national policies, and undertake the basic administrative functions of national public affairs and their work attitude in the workplace as well as their work efficiency has an irreplaceable role in the orderly operation and maintenance of the entire national society. The career development of grass-roots civil servants is not easy, and there is a common problem of single career promotion channel and narrow development space in the civil service group (Tan Shigui, Wang Jianlin, 2013), especially as a grass-roots civil servant, there are few opportunities for promotion, limited promotion space, and low salary income, which makes a lot of grass-roots civil servants with potential to reach a certain stage of development, and then they will be prone to face the "ceiling" of their personal career prematurely. This phenomenon is known as the career plateau in academic field.

Studies have also confirmed that when employees experience career plateau phenomenon, it will, to a certain extent, have a negative impact on work engagement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, positive work behaviours, etc. Therefore, the issue of career plateau has received

extensive attention from researchers and managers. However, in general, most of the previous studies have mostly focused on corporate employees, and studies on civil servant career groups are relatively rare, so there is a need to pay attention to the career plateau phenomenon of grassroots civil servants. Civil servants' career deviation seriously affects the development prospects of grass-roots governments, organizational performance, the legitimate rights and interests of others, and personal future development, and even undermines the sustainable development of grass-roots organs and the harmony and stability of the society. Although there have been a few studies on the subsequent impact of career plateau of grass roots civil servants, for example, the career plateau of grassroots civil servants affects the organisational commitment, but there is no research on the subsequent specific behaviour of career plateau on civil servants groups. Workplace deviation is a typical anti-productive behaviour, which is often manifested in spontaneous violation of organisational norms, and there is a lack of research on the impact of the career plateau on workplace deviation in China.

In addition, unlike corporate employees, civil service groups are often also influenced by public service motivation and have a certain internal drive, which has an important impact on their work behaviour. At the same time, the feedback from the outside world (external evaluation, internal evaluation, internal support, etc.) perceived by grass-roots civil servants have an important impact on their work mindset, thus, it is very necessary to analyse in depth the role of civil servants' psychological entitlement in career plateau and workplace deviation, and the research results will have a greater value of reference to the management of grass roots civil service team.

Based on this, the present study attempts to reveal the attenuating effect of public service motivation on psychological entitlement and the enhancing effect of psychological entitlement on work place deviance from the career plateau experienced by grass-roots civil servants expanding the public sector related research. Taking grassroots civil servants as the research object, this paper adopts a questionnaire survey to explore the effects of career plateau on civil servants' psychological entitlement and workplace deviation behaviour in the light of civil servant motivation for public service. Focusing on career plateau and workplace deviance, the study aims to explore the internal factors that reduce the negativity of grassroots civil servants and enhance their work efficiency, and to provide theoretical recommendations and suggestions for the staffing and training of grassroots civil servants in China.

## **2. Literature Review and Research Hypotheses**

### **2.1 Civil servants' career plateau and workplace deviation behaviour**

A career plateau is a state of relative stagnation in an individual's career development in an organisation. This concept was first proposed by Ference (1977), who first suggested that a career plateau is a stage in an individual's career where the likelihood of further advancement is very low from the point of view of 'promotion'. Career plateaus include not only the low likelihood of people circulating up and down vertically in an organisation, but are also reflected in less horizontal communication. A career plateau is a prolonged period of time in which an individual has difficulty "taking on greater or more responsibility" (Feldman & Weitz, 1988) at a particular stage of his or her career. Previous research has shown that career plateaus have a negative impact on work engagement, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, positive work behaviours, psychological withdrawal behaviours, and turnover. And although previous studies are enlightening, most of the subjects are corporate employees, and studies on civil servants career groups are rare. This paper argues that it is necessary to pay attention to the phenomenon of career plateau of grassroots civil servants. At the same time, career is an important source for people to meet the basic material life security, and to obtain a sense of achievement and realize self-worth, and the sustainable development of career and career success are the goals that people generally pursue. However, when people enter the career plateau stage, their self-worth and personal development demands are not satisfied, which leads to career frustration and cognitive dissonance, which in turn affects work motivation and organizational

identity, and ultimately leads to workplace deviation behaviour. In the 1990s, Robinson and Bennett defined public deviance as the spontaneous behaviour of an individual organisation that violates the organisation's norms, policies and systems, and which threatens the interests of the organisation and the members of the organisation, causing damage. This definition is accepted by most scholars, from which it can also be seen that public deviation mainly takes the members of the organisation as the specific subject, emphasizing that the deviation is spontaneous and purposeful, i.e. the employee's intentional behaviour, excluding accidental or unintentional circumstances, and that his or her deviation violates the organisation's rules, regulations and ethical norms, and ultimately harms the organisation and its internal members common interests. Therefore based on the above analysis, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

H1: Career plateau is significantly and positively related to workplace deviation among civil servants.

## **2.2 The mediating role of psychological entitlement**

Psychological entitlements viewed as a stable and pervasive subjective belief and perception of feeling entitled to preferential treatment and exemption from social responsibility. Grubbs proposed a theoretical model of psychological entitlement in 2016, which suggests that psychological entitlement can have an impact on an individual's behaviours and perceptions, and therefore divides it into three core concepts: exaggerated expectations, feelings of entitlement and a particular self-concept. The model points out that because psychologically privileged individuals have excessive and unrealistic expectations of themselves, which cannot be consistently met, they are more likely to feel a sense of unfairness or dissatisfaction, and thus engage in a range of negative behaviours, relative to no psychologically privileged individuals. Combing through previous literature, it is found that few studies have placed psychological privilege, career plateau and workplace deviance within the same study to explore the relationship between them, whereas through theoretical analysis and logical reasoning, a link between the three can be found. Psychological entitlement essentially reflects an individual's cognitive evaluation of himself or herself, which is a relatively stable subjective perceptual belief, and this cognitive tendency will provide self-defense and psychological orientation when facing the gap between reality and expectation. In the face of the career plateau, individuals often have higher expectations, wanting higher promotion or more value realisation, while the disappointment of the organisation when they are unable to perform within the organisation will deepen the privileged mentality of their own entitlement, i.e., what they should have obtained but were unable to realize. The accumulation of such discrepancies leads to the formation of high levels of psychological privilege, which in turn reinforces the high level of dissatisfaction with the organisation in which they live, and their disdain for organisational norms and even their perceived high level of legitimacy for their own deviance.

When an individual has a high level of psychological privilege, psychological entitlement stimulates paranoia at the cognitive level, and the employee will reinforce a sense of self centeredness, while at the same time diminishing the individual's sense of responsibility, empathy for others, and ability to think differently. This diminished sense of responsibility often leads to negative behaviours and internal justifications for negative behaviours. In the workplace, this translates into deviant behaviours by organisational members, further slacking off and even breaking the rules and regulations, which has a negative impact on the organisational ecosystem.

Based on the above analysis, this paper argues that psychological entitlement plays a transformative role in the influence of the independent variable (career plateau) on the dependent variable (workplace deviance): the negative experience of personal psychological entitlement due to the career plateau leads to negative emotions and negative behaviours that result in deviant behaviours.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study:

H2: Psychological entitlement has a mediating utility in career plateau and workplace deviance.

H3: Psychological entitlement has a positive effect on workplace deviant behaviour.

### 2.3 The mediating role of psychological entitlement

Public Service Motivation (Public Service Motivation) is one of the current frontiers and popular concepts in the field of public management, and its research began in the United States and gradually expanded to other regions such as Europe, until 2008, the domestic scholars Li Xiaohua on the Western context of public service motivation for the initial introduction, other scholars around the concept of public service motivation began further exploration and research. The earliest explanation of the concept of public service motivation was made by Perry & Wise, who argued that public service motivation is a personal tendency to respond to motivations from public institutions and organisations. Most of the domestic scholars' understanding and research on the concept of public service motivation is based on Perry's explanation of the concept of public service motivation and the definition of the concept of public service motivation by scholars in other countries. At present, academics have not made a unified explanation of the concept of public service motivation, and scholars in various countries do not focus on the concept of public service motivation in different ways". Chen Shixiang and Su Jianjian found that many foreign scholars believe that the background of public service motivation is related to publicity, public service, and sociality by collating and summarizing a large amount of foreign related literature.

As a kind of intrinsic motivation, public service motivation plays an important role in driving individual positive behaviour. Research has found that public service motivation has a significant positive correlation with job engagement and job satisfaction, indicating that if grassroots public service personnel have a higher public service motivation, they will have a higher recognition of the value of their work, which will result in a higher job engagement. For example, Zhu Guangnan et al. (2012) pointed out that public service motivation has a significant positive impact on job commitment, and "commitment to public interest" in public service motivation can be used as an important means to enhance the job commitment of civil servants. Gloria (2016) pointed out that public service motivation has a significant positive effect on employee performance when the degree of individual-organisation match is high. When the individual-organisation match is low, public service motivation has a significant negative effect on employee performance.

It can be seen that the more attractive and valuable an organisation's mission is to people, the more likely it is that the organisation will be supported by those people, and the more likely it is that they will be attracted to join the organisation and be motivated to comply with the rules and regulations of the organisation and to do a better job in the organisation. The higher the level of motivation for public service, the greater the willingness of grassroots civil servants to devote themselves to their work as workers exercising the basic administrative powers of the State, and the higher the sense of value and identity they feel as a result, and the greater the recognition of the value of their position and their work, the more they are able to reconcile themselves to the dissatisfaction of psychological entitlement that accompanies the high plateau of a professional career. Although the development of the individual within the organisation is limited and the potential of the individual is not maximised, with the vision of serving the public interest, the member's self-evaluation and the organisation's evaluation system can be altered to continue to maximise the fulfilment of his/her mission and work, and to reduce the deviation from the public arena in the context of recognising the value of the organisation's work and its rules and regulations.

Therefore, this paper proposes the following hypotheses regarding the moderating role of public service motivation:

H4: Public service motivation plays an inverse moderating role between career plateau and psychological privilege, which means that the stronger the public service motivation, the stronger the inverse effect of career plateau on psychological entitlement produced by grassroots civil servants.

## 3. Methodology and Procedures

### 3.1 Research Model

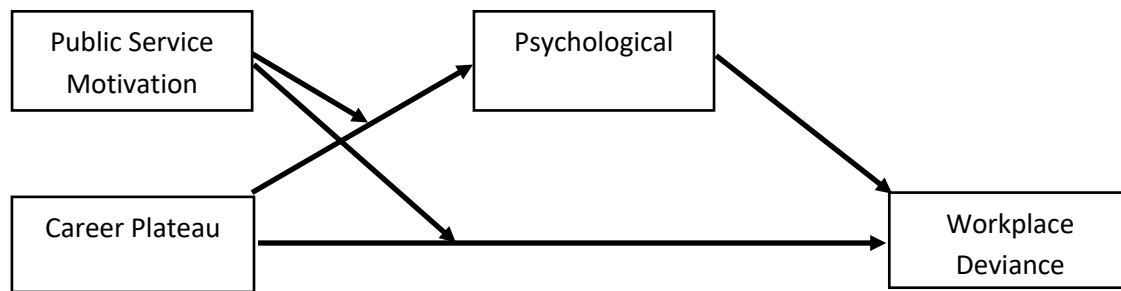


Figure 3.1: Research model

### 3.2 Research Procedures and targets

This study takes the grassroots civil servants mainly in Xiangcheng District of Suzhou City and other areas as the research object, and the research was completed between August and September 2023 by distributing electronic questionnaires through Questionnaire Star. Firstly, the researchers took the initiative to contact the leaders and personnel departments of different units, and released the Questionnaire Star questionnaire with their support and cooperation. When distributing the questionnaires, the researchers emphasized in advance the anonymity and data confidentiality of the research and used for academic research purposes only, in order to reduce their concerns, and the subjects who participated in the survey were given a small gift since. The actual distribution of 500 questionnaires, recovered a total of 475 valid questionnaires, effective recovery rate of 95 percent.

### 3.3 Measurement of Variables

**Career plateau:** The Career Plateau Scale developed by Milliman (1992), which is widely used by current career plateau researchers, was used. The scale consists of 12 items, 6 items measuring Level plateaus and 6 items measuring content plateaus, and is self-rated by the employee. The scale is a 5-point scale, with higher scores indicating more severe career plateaus, Example question items are: "I have limited opportunities for upward mobility in the organization", "am unlikely to obtain a higher level position in the organization", "My job responsibilities have not been changing" and "My job is unchallenging", etc.

**Motivation for public service:** The 5-item scale used by Wright et al. (2012), such as "It is more important to be able to contribute to society than to my personal achievements", was used; this scale is a 5-point scale, with higher scores indicating stronger motivation for public service, and is completed by the employee's self-assessment. Example questions: "I can give my energy to public service", etc.

**Psychological Privilege:** The scale developed by Campbell et al. in 2004, which is the most widely recognised in the field of psychology, was used. There are 9 items on a 5-point scale to measure the extent to which employees feel entitled to preferential treatment, exemption from social responsibility, and a stable and pervasive sense of entitlement, with higher scores indicating greater psychological privilege. Example items: Good things should happen to me, deserve special treatment, etc.

**Workplace Deviance:** a scale developed by Bennett et al. was used. They divided workplace deviant behaviour into two dimensions, organizationally directed deviant behavior and interpersonally directed deviant behaviour, depending on the direction of the workplace deviance. The organisation-directed deviant behaviour includes 12 items and the interpersonal-directed deviant behaviour includes 7 items. It was tested to have good reliability and validity, and the scale matured

with authority, the revised scale based on Robinson scale was borrowed from Dong Xiaxia (2018). The scale uses a 5-point scale, with higher scores representing more frequent employee workplace deviant behavior. In this study, 10 items were retained to take into account the situation of the research participants and the national conditions of China. Examples of questions include: “Deliberately wasting company materials or goods”. And so on.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Reliability Analysis

Table 4.1: Scale internal consistency reliability

Variable	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Item count
CP	0.853	12
PE	0.937	9
WD	0.937	10
PSM	0.856	5

In this study, SPSS software was used to analyze the data and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used for testing, with alpha coefficients greater than 0.6 indicating that the questionnaire is acceptable, and greater than 0.7 indicating a high degree of reliability. According to the table can be seen in each scale Cronbach coefficient table can be concluded that the alpha coefficient of the measurement scales of career plateau, psychological privilege, deviant behaviour in public places and motivation for public service is greater than 0.7(CP=0.853,PE=0.937,WD= 0.937,PSM = 0.856), which means that the reliability of the scales is high, and the data from the survey of this study are reliable.

### 4.2 Validty Analysis

Table 4.2: Validation factor analysis results

	Chi-square	df	Degree of freedom	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
Four-factor model	361.724	71	5.095	0.093	0.945	0.929	0.048
Three-factor model	1177.303	74	15.910	0.177	0.790	0.742	0.122
Two-factor model	2303.402	76	30.308	0.248	0.576	0.492	0.165
One-factor model	3245.68	77	42.152	0.294	0.397	0.287	0.222

We first used the one way test to examine the possible common methodological bias of the study, the chi-square test of degrees of freedom ratio( $5.631 > 5$ ) as well as the CFI( $0.782 < 0.9$ ) values were unsatisfactory, so we switched to testing the model through four factor analysis, and from the table above, it can be seen that the four-factor model is well fitted, and its fit index is significantly better than that of the other three competing models, which indicates that the four variables are independent of each other and have good discriminant validity.

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table4.3: Relevance Analysis

Variable	PSM	WD	PSM	PE
PSM	1			
WD	-0.022	1		
CP	.216**	.432**	1	
PE	.227**	.305**	.478**	1

\*\*Significant correlation at the 0.01 level

As can be seen from the above table, the correlation between all the variables is significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, it shows that workplace deviance is not only influenced by career plateau but also indirectly through interaction with other variables.

#### 4.4 Regression Analysis

Table 4.4: Result of linear regression analysis

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Covariance Diagnostics	
	<i>B</i>	Standard Error	Beta			VIF	Tolerance
A constant	0.568	0.234	-	2.424	0.016*	-	-
PSM	-0.166	0.05	-0.14	-3.316	0.001**	1.071	0.934
CP	0.511	0.061	0.391	8.365	0.000**	1.317	0.759
PE	0.159	0.05	0.149	3.186	0.002**	1.324	0.755
R <sup>2</sup>				0.218			
Adjustment of R <sup>2</sup>				0.213			
<i>F</i>				<i>F</i> (3,32)=43.704, $p=0.000$			
D-W				1.939			

From the above table, PSM, CP, PE as independent variables and WD as the dependent variable are analyzed in linear regression analysis, from the above table, it can be seen that the R-squared value of the model is 0.218,  $F=43.704$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ , which means that at least one of the PSM, CP, PE will have an effect on WD, in addition, for the model of multiple covariation, it is found that all the VIF values in the model are less than 5, which means that there is no covariance problem; and the D-W value is around the number 2, which means that there is no autocorrelation between sample data, thus indicating that there is no autocorrelation. In addition, the test for multicollinearity of the model found that all the VIF values in the model are less than 5, which means that there is no problem of covariance; and the D-W value is around the number 2, which means that there is no autocorrelation

in the model, and there is no correlation between the sample data, and the model is better. Ultimately the specific analyses are known: The p-value for public service motivation is  $-0.166(t=-3.316, p=0.001 < 0.01)$ , implying that public service motivation would have a significant negative relationship on workplace deviance behaviour. The p-value of occupational plateau is  $0.511(t=8.365, p=0.000 < 0.01)$  implying that occupational plateau will have a significant positive influence relationship on workplace deviance behaviour. The p-value of heart privilege is  $0.159(t=3.186, p=0.002 < 0.01)$ , implying that heart privilege will have a significant positive influence relationship on workplace deviant behaviour. Summarizing the analysis it is clear that H1 and H3 hold.

#### 4.5 Intermediation Utility Analysis

It can be seen in the analyses that there are three types of models involved in the analysis of mediated effects, as follows: Model 1, a regression model of the independent variable X on the dependent variable Y :  $WD = -0.009 + 0.724 * PE$ ; Model 2, regression modelling of independent variable X with mediator variable M (multiple models if multiple mediator variables):  $PE = 0.462 + 0.843 * WD$ ; Model 3, the independent variable X and the mediator variable M together with the dependent variable Y are constructed in a regression model:  $WD = -0.116 + 0.53 * CP + 0.23 * PE$ .

Table 4.5: Result of intermediation analysis

c	a	a(p)	b	b(p)	a*b	a*b (B)	a*b (z)	a*b (P)	a*b (9)	c'	c'(p)
0.72	0.84	0.000**	0.23	0.05	0.19	0.09	2.06	0.041*	0.02	0.53	0.001**
4	3	*		0 *	4	4	7	*	4 - 0.40 7		*

From the table above, it is clear that psychological privilege has partially mediated effect on the influence of workplace deviance at the career plateau, and H2 holds.

#### 4.6 Regulatory Utility Analysis

Table 4.6: Result of regulatory analysis

	Model 1				Model 2				Model 3			
	ratio	SE	t	P	ratio	SE	t	P	ratio	SE	t	P
cons	0.21	0.08	2.48	0.014**	0.21	0.08	2.51	0.014**	0.20	0.08	2.32	0.022**
t	7	7	9		7	6	2		5	8	5	
CP	0.70	0.11	6.06	0.000**	0.76	0.12	6.30	0.000**	0.75	0.12	6.17	0.000**
	6	6	6	*	3	1	6	*	4	2	7	*
PS					-	0.10	-	0.117	-	0.11	-	0.200



M		0.16	7	1.58		0.14	3	1.29	
		9		1		5		1	
CP*						0.06	0.09	0.69	0.689
PS						2		5	
M									
R <sup>2</sup>	0.273			0.291				0.295	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.266			0.277				0.273	
F	F(100, 1)=36.794, P=0.000***			F(2, 97)=19.928, P=0.000***				F(3, 96)=13.375, P=0.000***	
$\Delta R^2$	0.273			0.291				0.295	
$\Delta F$	$\Delta F(1, 100)=36.794,$ P=0.000***			$\Delta F(1, 97)=2.499,$ P=0.087*				$\Delta F(1, 96)=20.304,$ P=0.000***	

The results of the moderated effects analysis table show that the interaction term of Model 3 presents significance based on the interaction term CP\* PSM with a significance p-value of 0.689; implying that PSM significantly interferes with the effect of CP on WD, i.e. moderating effect exists and H4 holds.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestion

Understanding the effects of career plateaus in Chinese grassroots civil servants as well as their rationale and reducing their negative impact on employees' workplace behaviors is a new issue facing Chinese public organizations. This study not only helps to explain the process of career plateau's influence on civil servants' behaviour in the workplace, but also provides basis for intervening in civil servants 'career plateau from the perspective of psychological privilege. The details are as follows.

### 5.1 Theoretical Contribution

As mentioned earlier, there are several obvious shortcomings in previous studies focusing on occupational plateaus. First, in a large number of studies on the consequences of the impact of career plateaus, the main focus is on the impact on individual work attitudes, and there is a lack of research on the impact on work behaviours; second, many scholars in the academic world analyse the attitudes and behaviours of employees when they experience career plateaus from the Level of the direct relationship between employees experiencing a career plateau and workplace deviance, and there is a lack of exploration of the impact process and mechanisms. Especially the mediating mechanism; based on this, the From the career plateau experienced by grassroots civil servants, this study reveals the attenuating effect of public service motivation on psychological entitlement and the enhancing effect of psychological entitlement on workplace deviance, expanding related research in the public sector.

First, this study focuses on the impact of career plateaus on the workplace deviance of grassroots civil servants. Our study shows that career plateaus are significantly and positively related to workplace deviance behaviour of grassroots civil servants, this study not only expands previous

research on the consequences of career plateaus and makes up for the Lack of research on the consequences of behaviours, but also serves as a warning for civil servants' management time. The results of this study show that career plateaus not only lead to a decline in motivation and enthusiasm, a reluctance to take on responsibilities, a reluctance to act, but also a negative withdrawal and a performance of getting by, this result is a warning to announce organisations that they should pay attention to the phenomenon of career plateau of civil servants at the grassroots level and accelerate the research and development of coping strategies and countermeasures to deal with it.

Second, how do career plateaus negatively affect civil servants' behaviour in the executive? Previous literature has rarely explored the mechanism of career plateau on consequence variables, and only Xie et al. (2015) studied the negative impact of career plateau on turnover intention through the mediating role of organisational commitment based on a sample of Chinese corporate employees. The main reason for this is the lack of an effective theoretical perspective. In this study, from the psychological condition, how career plateaus affect civil servants' work behaviors depend on individuals' attitudes and perceptions of the career plateau state. According to the psychological entitlement theory, when an individual has a high level of psychological privilege, the psychological entitlement will stimulate paranoia at the cognitive level of the individual, and the employee will strengthen the sense of self-centeredness, while reducing the individual's sense of responsibility, empathy towards others. And the ability to think differently. This diminished sense of responsibility often leads to negative behaviours and internal justifications for negative behaviours. In the workplace this manifests itself in deviant behaviour on the part of organisational members, further slacking off or even going against the system and breaking the rules, which has a negative impact on the organisational ecology. The results of the data analysis confirm that employee psychological entitlement plays a fully mediating role in the influence of career plateau on deviance in the workplace.

## 5.2 Practical Significance

In practice, it also provides us with a scientific basis for governance and intervention in the career plateau of civil servants:

First, change the individual perception. Civil servants should also be soberly aware of the fact that a single complaint of organisational unfairness and negative retreat, it is likely to let their own development path is more and more narrow, and thus caught in a dead cycle or long term, it is even more unhelpful to get out of the career plateau predicament.

Secondly, change individual behaviour to enhance self-motivation for public service. We suggest that civil servants can take advantage of career plateaus to elevate their mindset to alleviate the emergence of psychological privilege, while reviewing their original motivation for public service as well as their mission. In short, changing individual attitudes and behaviours when it is not possible to change the organizational and external environment is a practical path.

Thirdly, the creation of a favorable social environment and orientation, The tendency of civil servants to adopt an irrational "heuristic" cognitive processing mode towards their own career plateau is, to a certain extent, due to the low motivation of public service. Therefore. Society should provide civil servants with better welfare benefits and value orientation, so that civil servants can reduce the pressure for promotion and pay more attention to behavior that contributes to society.

## 5.3 Limitations and Prospects

There are some limitations to this study as well as directions for future research. Firstly this study mainly used a cross-sectional research design and was unable to conclusively prove the causal relationship of the impact of career plateau on on-the-job behaviour. This is because the process of change from career plateau to the emergence of civil servants' psychological entitlement to their final changes in workplace behaviour is a latent time-dimensional process. It is suggested that a

longitudinal research design could be adopted in the future to compensate for the shortcomings of this study. Second, this study used the "self-report" method to measure all the variables, which makes it difficult to exclude the effect of "common methodological bias" to a certain extent. It is suggested that a multi-temporal and multi-stage data collection method could be adopted in the future, or the evaluation of others could be used to measure civil servants on-the-job behaviours. Thirdly, a large number of previous studies have focused on the negative consequences of career plateaus, and so has this study. However, career development is dynamic and temporary stagnation in career development is unavoidable. Individuals can also take the opportunity of career stagnation to revisit and plan their careers, which can also help start a new career journey. We suggest that future researchers can adopt a positive perspective to study the phenomenon of career plateau, such as focusing on those individuals who do not fall into a state of negative withdrawal in the career plateau, and exploring the potential positive impact of career plateau on career development, which should be a very meaningful research direction.

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