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## Identification of Dimensions, Components, and Indicators of Career Advancement for Employees in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance

### ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted with the aim of identifying the dimensions, components, and indicators of career advancement for employees in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. In terms of purpose, this research is applied; regarding the nature of data, it is qualitative and based on meta-synthesis and the Delphi method. The statistical population included both theoretical experts (university professors) and practical experts (relevant officials within the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance). Based on the principle of saturation and using purposive sampling, 20 interviewees were selected. The data collection method was the Delphi technique, and data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis with Maxqda-V18 software. The findings revealed that career advancement in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance encompasses three dimensions: need-based career advancement, value-based career advancement, and talent-based career advancement. Need-based career advancement includes independence, economic empowerment, and social status. Value-based career advancement involves internal and external excellence, as well as skills and knowledge enhancement. Additionally, talent-based career advancement consists of technical and functional competencies, managerial qualifications, and creativity and innovation. Given the identified dimensions, these programs can contribute to improving employees' quality of work life, enhancing their motivation and productivity, and strengthening the competencies required by the organization. Ultimately, these measures can lead to the creation of a dynamic and innovative organizational environment that supports the organization's growth and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Career advancement, need-based career advancement, technical and functional competencies, managerial qualifications.

### Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving organizational landscape, the concept of career advancement has gained increasing prominence as a determinant of employee satisfaction, productivity, and organizational success. Particularly within public sector institutions, such as ministries and governmental bodies, facilitating employees' career growth has emerged as a key strategic priority in fostering motivation, retaining top talent, and enhancing institutional performance [1]. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, as a central pillar in national governance and fiscal planning, is no exception. Given the complexity and bureaucratic structure of governmental systems, career progression is often subject to multilayered criteria that go beyond mere performance evaluations and delve into personal development, institutional needs, and socio-cultural expectations [2].

Career development is fundamentally intertwined with individual job satisfaction and broader organizational objectives. Research has shown that employees who perceive clear and attainable career advancement opportunities demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational loyalty [3, 4]. This relationship is supported by the findings

of [5], who emphasized the predictive role of job satisfaction and motivation in employee retention. In the context of the public sector, which traditionally grapples with rigid hierarchies and slower promotional paths, it becomes all the more critical to redefine and structure effective mechanisms for career mobility that are inclusive, transparent, and responsive to contemporary organizational demands [6, 7].

Various theoretical models have been developed to conceptualize career advancement. The Resource-Based View (RBV) of strategic human resource management emphasizes the cultivation of human capital as a core organizational asset [8]. Within this framework, employees' career advancement is not only a reward mechanism but also an investment in long-term organizational competitiveness. Career progression pathways that align with employees' evolving competencies and organizational priorities are more likely to succeed in enhancing performance outcomes and institutional cohesion [9, 10]. Moreover, scholars such as [11] have highlighted the significance of international assignment experiences and global mobility in shaping career success, offering valuable insights for ministries managing cross-border economic engagements.

Career development is also intricately linked to employees' perceived self-efficacy and their psychological orientation toward achievement. According to [12], the meaning of career success varies across historical and ideological contexts, necessitating a localized understanding of advancement in different sectors and societies. In Iran, for instance, studies such as those by [13] have explored the barriers to women's career advancement, shedding light on the structural and cultural impediments that must be considered when designing equitable promotion systems. Similarly, [14] explored the success factors of career paths among top academic professionals, emphasizing the importance of strategic planning and merit-based progression.

In this vein, psychological and behavioral factors also play a significant role in shaping career trajectories. Engagement, resilience, and job crafting have been found to mediate the relationship between job roles and employee development [15, 16]. In particular, the concept of job crafting—where employees proactively shape their job roles to better fit their strengths and interests—has been linked to enhanced service quality and recovery performance, especially in high-stakes environments such as hospitality and healthcare [17, 18]. These insights are increasingly being integrated into public administration frameworks, emphasizing the need for bottom-up empowerment alongside top-down career planning.

An essential dimension of career advancement lies in the institutional support structures, including training programs, mentorship, and performance appraisal systems. According to [3], training initiatives tailored to individual career aspirations significantly increase career satisfaction and retention. Similarly, [19] underscore the role of both material and emotional rewards in fostering a sustainable organizational climate. However, [20] argue that in the post-COVID era, digitalization of career support and virtual learning environments must also be incorporated to ensure uninterrupted career progression amidst crises. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, which operates under a high level of public scrutiny and strategic importance, needs to adopt adaptive career development models that can address the fast-changing socio-economic landscape.

From a strategic human capital perspective, career development must also be aligned with organizational performance indicators and macroeconomic goals. [21] propose that personal attributes and behavioral responsiveness of academic leaders are key inputs for designing effective HR intervention models. This logic extends to public sector leadership, where the performance of managers and specialists directly impacts policy implementation and fiscal responsibility. Hence,

identifying the dimensions and indicators of career advancement becomes not only a matter of employee welfare but also an organizational imperative for effective governance [22].

The broader implications of career advancement are also observable in the motivational dynamics it generates within the workforce. According to [23], internal career development initiatives that promote skill-building and knowledge-sharing contribute to a culture of retention and innovation. This is particularly relevant in ministries, where job roles are often standardized and bureaucratic. Providing employees with avenues for professional growth through workshops, cross-functional rotations, and leadership pipelines can break the monotony and inspire creative contributions [24, 25]. Moreover, studies have shown that when career paths are clearly communicated and linked to measurable achievements, employees are more likely to invest in long-term career planning and organizational loyalty [26, 27].

Nonetheless, despite the growing emphasis on career development, practical challenges persist. Government agencies, such as the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, often face constraints in budget allocation, institutional inertia, and hierarchical rigidity that limit the effective implementation of career advancement programs. [2] identifies several administrative and systemic challenges in Iran's public sector, including the lack of transparent promotion criteria, politicization of appointments, and insufficient investment in human resource development. These issues call for a more integrated and evidence-based approach to career advancement that leverages international best practices while remaining sensitive to local organizational culture and national development priorities.

To address these challenges, a robust model of career advancement tailored to the needs of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance is needed—one that encompasses both individual aspirations and institutional requirements. The model must incorporate structural components such as competency-based assessments, professional development plans, and equitable performance evaluations. Simultaneously, it should emphasize motivational and behavioral dimensions like employee engagement, perceived fairness, and psychological empowerment. As [28] notes, the interplay between competence, confidence, and career development forms the cornerstone of any sustainable advancement framework.

This study thus seeks to fill an important gap by identifying the dimensions, components, and indicators of career advancement among employees in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

## Methods and Materials

This study is applied in terms of purpose and qualitative in nature, employing meta-synthesis and the Delphi method. The statistical population included all scholarly articles and academic works in domestic and international databases, as well as existing documents and regulations in the field. In this stage, 23 articles were selected based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol through purposive non-random sampling. The selection criteria for articles in the meta-synthesis stage included recency and relevance to the research topic, high scientific quality and credibility, inclusion in reputable domestic and international databases, appropriate methodology, and diversity of perspectives.

In the second stage (Delphi technique), the population included all professors and researchers specializing in organizational behavior management, human resource management, and public administration. Given that the minimum number of experts in a Delphi panel is generally between 10 and 20, this study selected 20 experts through purposive non-random sampling. These experts were either directly or indirectly involved in employee career advancement in public sector

organizations. The selection criteria for experts included: holding at least a doctoral degree and having teaching experience in related fields, relevant expertise, participation in practical projects and related research experience, familiarity with policies, procedures, challenges, and obstacles, the ability to provide analytical insights, diversity of viewpoints, commitment to participation, having official positions and decision-making experience, and practical experience relevant to the study's field.

The data collection tool was a systematic review of literature and credible academic sources. This process involved a precise and targeted search of academic databases, articles, books, and dissertations related to the research topic. In the content validity assessment during the qualitative phase, it was confirmed that the content and concepts under study were fully and comprehensively covered in the existing literature. Articles were selected with high precision, and an initial screening was conducted. A flow diagram (documenting the article selection process) was used to identify appropriate articles for the study. At this stage, filters were applied regarding temporal (domestic and international), spatial (database origin), research nature (synthesis, review, qualitative, or quantitative), and thematic criteria (keywords for search). Following this, both coarse and fine-grained screening processes were carried out.

Furthermore, internal validity results indicated that findings from the qualitative phase were not influenced by external factors and were accurately interpreted. A 27-item PRISMA checklist was used, along with independent analysis by the researcher and a statistics expert, Cohen's kappa coefficient for inter-rater agreement, standard criteria for evaluation, repeatability (transparency of methodological procedures), application of the meta-synthesis method for accurate data coding and analysis, and expert feedback and code refinement to detect inconsistencies.

To ensure reliability in the qualitative method, techniques such as meticulous documentation of the research process, intra-researcher alignment, and inter-researcher alignment were applied. Overall, the results confirmed the validity and reliability of the data obtained during the qualitative phase.

Additionally, in the second qualitative phase (Delphi technique), a Delphi worksheet was used. Experts were asked not only to score the items but also to provide comments or suggestions regarding the indicators and to add any new indicators they deemed important to the end of the table. For content validity of the Delphi worksheet, questions were first designed to be simple, clear, and relevant. Simple and conceptually clear language was used for constructing the closed-ended questionnaire items so they would be easily understood by experts.

Before the Delphi worksheet was implemented, content validity was evaluated using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) formula, which confirmed that the worksheet content comprehensively covered the intended concepts. For assessing the reliability of the Delphi worksheet, internal consistency and test-retest reliability were used, both of which confirmed the worksheet's validity and reliability in the Delphi phase.

In the Delphi stage and closed-ended questions, mean and standard deviation were used to assess the results and determine the level of expert agreement. Kendall's coefficient of concordance was also used to assess expert agreement and prioritize items in the closed-response questionnaire using IBM SPSS Statistics version 16.

## Findings and Results

The number of relevant officials was greater than the number of university professors. Furthermore, the predominant academic discipline among participants was human resource management. The number of officials holding doctoral degrees

was higher compared to those with master's degrees. Additionally, the number of male participants was significantly greater than that of female participants. Most participants were between 45 and 50 years old and had between 10 and 20 years of professional experience.

To answer the above questions and design a career advancement model for employees of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, the identification process was conducted in three stages as outlined below.

**Table 1.**

*First Round of the Delphi Process for Dimensions, Components, and Indicators of Career Advancement for Employees in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance*

Indicator	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	...	19	20	Mean
Work-life balance	5	4	5	3	5	4	5	5	5	4	...	4	5	4.6
Enjoyment of life after work	4	5	3	5	3	5	3	5	5	5	...	5	3	4.3
Access to extended vacations	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	...	3	5	4.5
Annual salary level	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	4	5	4.7
Receiving incentives, bonuses, or promotions	3	5	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	...	4	5	4.3
Ability to meet basic needs	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.6
Earning high income and enabling family well-being	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	4	5	4.6
Having a satisfying life outside the work environment	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	4	4	4	...	3	5	4.3
Receiving respectful social treatment due to career path	4	5	3	5	3	5	3	5	5	5	...	5	3	4.3
Recognition of one's career path by others	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	...	3	5	4.5
Contributing to national prosperity and public welfare through job duties	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	4	5	4.7
Job security	3	5	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	...	4	5	4.3
Influence of job decisions on organizational performance	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.6
Fulfillment of personal needs and preferences by pursuing a desired job	5	4	5	3	3	5	4	4	5	5	...	5	4	4.3
Meaningful work	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.6
Continuous training	5	4	3	3	2	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.1
Development of transferable knowledge and experience-based skills	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.8
Enhancement of job-related cognitive capabilities	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	5.0
Developmental coaching	5	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	...	5	3	4.5
Job-specific technical skills	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.6
Strategic decision-making	5	4	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	...	4	5	4.4
Ability to lead a team toward high performance	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.6
Communication skills	5	4	3	3	2	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.1
Opportunity for innovation in job activities	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.8
Challenging job experiences	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	3	4	5	...	5	5	4.4

As shown, in the first round of the Delphi process, no indicator received an average score lower than 4. However, several new indicators were suggested by the experts, which were presented in the second round of the Delphi process as follows.

**Table 2.**

*Second Round of the Delphi Process for the Dimensions, Components, and Indicators of Career Advancement for Employees in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance*

Indicator	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	...	19	20	Mean
Work-life balance	5	4	5	3	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.6
Enjoyment of life after work	4	5	3	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.3
Access to extended vacations	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	...	5	5	4.5
Annual salary level	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.7
Receiving incentives, bonuses, or promotions	5	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.3
Ability to meet basic needs	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
High earning potential and ensuring family well-being	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	4	4	4	...	5	3	4.3
Satisfaction in life outside the work environment	4	5	3	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	...	3	5	4.3
Social respect due to career path	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	...	5	3	4.5
Recognition of one's career path by others	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	5	4	4.7
Contribution to national development and public welfare through job performance	3	5	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	...	5	4	4.3
Job security	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
Impact of professional decisions on organizational performance	5	4	5	5	3	5	4	4	5	5	...	3	5	4.3

Fulfillment of personal needs and preferences through pursuit of a desired career	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
Meaningful work	5	4	3	3	2	5	4	5	5	5	...	2	5	4.1
Continuous training	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.8
Development of transferable skills through experience and knowledge	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	5.0
Enhancement of job-related cognitive abilities	5	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	...	4	5	4.5
Developmental coaching	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
Job-specific technical skills	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
Strategic decision-making	5	4	3	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.1
Ability to lead a team toward achieving high performance	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.8
Communication skills	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	3	4	5	...	5	5	4.4
Opportunity for innovation in job activities	5	4	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	...	5	4	4.4
Challenging job experience	3	3	4	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	...	4	5	4.2
Activity within the Ministry or related domains	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	...	5	3	4.2
Participation in group activities and team projects	2	5	5	4	5	3	5	4	5	5	...	5	3	4.3
Higher education (Master's degree and above)	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
Proficiency in job-related technical and specialized skills	5	4	3	5	2	5	4	5	5	5	...	2	5	4.1
Participation in training courses and workshops for skill enhancement	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	3	4	5	...	5	5	4.4
Ability to find innovative and creative solutions to challenges	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	...	5	4	4.4

As shown, in the second round of the Delphi process, all indicators received scores above 4. As a result, no indicators were eliminated. To ensure the finalization of the process, the Delphi method was repeated for a third round, the results of which are presented below.

**Table 3.**

*Third Round of the Delphi Process for the Dimensions, Components, and Indicators of Career Advancement for Employees in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance*

Indicator	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	...	19	20	Mean
Work-life balance	5	4	5	3	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
Enjoyment of life after work	4	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.7
Access to extended vacations	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	5.0
Annual salary level	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.9
Receiving incentives, bonuses, or promotions	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.8
Ability to meet basic needs	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
High income potential and family well-being	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	5	4	4	...	4	4	4.5
Satisfaction in life outside the workplace	4	5	3	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.5
Respectful treatment in society due to career path	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	5	4	5	...	4	5	4.5
Recognition of one's career path by others	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.7
Contribution to national prosperity and public welfare through professional duties	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
Job security	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.8
Impact of job-related decisions on organizational performance	5	5	5	5	3	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.7
Fulfillment of personal needs and preferences through pursuit of a desired career	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	5.0
Meaningful work	5	4	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.5
Continuous training	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	5.0
Development of transferable knowledge and experience-based skills	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	5.0
Enhancement of job-related cognitive capabilities	5	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.8
Developmental coaching	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.9
Job-specific technical skills	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.9
Strategic decision-making	5	5	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.7
Ability to lead a group to achieve high performance	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.8
Communication skills	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	3	4	5	...	4	5	4.5
Opportunity for innovation in work activities	5	5	3	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	...	5	5	4.5
Challenging professional experiences	5	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.7
Involvement in the ministry or related fields	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.8
Participation in group activities and team projects	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.7
Higher education (Master's degree or above)	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	...	5	5	4.6
Proficiency in job-related technical and specialized skills	5	4	3	5	2	5	4	5	5	5	...	2	5	4.1
Participation in training courses and workshops for skill enhancement	5	4	5	3	5	5	5	3	4	5	...	5	5	4.4
Ability to develop innovative and creative solutions to future challenges	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	3	5	5	...	5	4	4.4

## Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the present study led to the identification of 30 key indicators categorized under various dimensions and components that collectively constitute a comprehensive model of career advancement for employees in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. Across three rounds of the Delphi method, all identified indicators consistently received high ratings from experts, particularly in areas related to work–life balance, professional development, strategic competencies, and psychological empowerment. Indicators such as *continuous training*, *development of transferable skills*, *job security*, *recognition of career paths*, *meaningful work*, and *participation in team projects* demonstrated especially strong consensus among the panel of experts, reflecting the multidimensional nature of career advancement in a public-sector context.

One of the most noteworthy findings was the emphasis on professional development and skill-building. Indicators like *continuous training*, *enhancement of cognitive capabilities*, and *participation in workshops* scored exceptionally high. These results align with previous research underscoring the pivotal role of learning and development in career progression. For instance, [3] and [4] both highlight that access to ongoing educational opportunities significantly enhances employees' career satisfaction and organizational commitment. Similarly, [8] points out that organizations embracing the resource-based view recognize employee capability as a critical strategic asset. In this context, it is clear that employees in the Ministry expect career growth to be directly linked with their participation in structured learning activities.

The data also emphasized intrinsic psychological factors such as *meaningful work*, *job satisfaction*, and *self-fulfillment*. These align with theories of job engagement and career self-determination proposed by scholars like [15] and [7], who argue that internal motivations often outperform extrinsic rewards in promoting long-term retention and performance. Moreover, [18] supports the idea that psychological variables such as autonomy, respect, and a sense of purpose are strong predictors of job satisfaction in high-pressure environments such as public institutions.

Another crucial category validated in the study relates to organizational support and recognition mechanisms. Indicators such as *promotion opportunities*, *job security*, *recognition by others*, and *fair performance evaluation* were found to significantly influence employees' perception of upward mobility. These findings mirror the results of [23], who established that internal career development systems and clear promotion pathways foster employee engagement. In particular, the high average ratings for indicators like *receiving incentives, bonuses, or promotions* and *annual salary level* resonate with the findings of [19], who demonstrated that both emotional and material incentives are vital to sustaining employee morale in service-intensive environments.

Beyond individual-level variables, the results highlighted the social and collective dimensions of career advancement. Indicators such as *participation in team projects*, *leadership capacity*, and *contribution to national development* reflect an orientation towards collective achievement and public value. This aligns with the findings of [21], who found that leadership behaviors and responsiveness to organizational needs enhance career development in educational institutions. Additionally, [22] showed that in security-oriented organizations, career advancement is closely linked to contributions made toward collective objectives and public welfare—a principle clearly transferable to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

Furthermore, the study confirms the relevance of external and socio-cultural factors in shaping career advancement frameworks. For example, *respectful treatment in society*, *recognition of career path by others*, and *alignment with personal values and goals* were validated by the experts. These factors echo the conclusions of [12], who argued that perceptions of career success are deeply embedded in cultural and historical narratives. In the Iranian context, structural constraints such



as bureaucratic rigidity and socio-political influences further complicate this dynamic, as observed by [13], who examined systemic barriers to women's career advancement.

Moreover, the study found that *strategic competencies*, including *decision-making*, *communication*, and *leadership skills*, were rated highly across all rounds. These competencies are essential not only for individual growth but also for institutional development. As [9] and [6] suggest, promotion systems that integrate competency assessments tend to be more equitable and performance-based. Especially in public agencies, where formalized promotion structures can lag behind private sector agility, these competencies offer a pathway for merit-based recognition and professional visibility.

The strong consensus around the indicator *work-life balance* indicates an evolving shift in employee expectations, even in government organizations. This corroborates the findings of [27], who reported that work environment factors significantly affect job satisfaction among government-employed nurses. Additionally, [1] emphasized the growing importance of flexible work arrangements and personal time in retaining public-sector talent, a shift especially amplified by the post-pandemic transformation of work cultures [20].

Taken together, the study's findings provide empirical support for an integrated model of career advancement that combines professional competencies, motivational factors, organizational support, and socio-cultural alignment. This holistic approach is consistent with the multi-faceted frameworks proposed by [10] and [28], who both argue that career satisfaction results from the confluence of personal development, institutional recognition, and contextual adaptability. Moreover, the current findings affirm the view of [11] that career success is best conceptualized as a long-term and multidimensional construct, influenced by both structural and individual variables.

While the study contributes significantly to the literature on public sector career development, it is not without limitations. First, the use of the Delphi method, while effective for expert consensus, inherently limits the diversity of perspectives, as it relies on a relatively small and homogenous group of participants. Most panelists were affiliated with governmental or academic institutions, potentially introducing bias towards institutional norms. Second, although the study employed a systematic meta-synthesis in its early phase, the focus remained largely on conceptual dimensions, and quantitative validation of the model was beyond its scope. Third, cultural specificity to the Iranian context may affect the generalizability of findings to other public sector environments, especially those with different governance structures and organizational cultures.

Future research should aim to empirically test the proposed model using large-scale quantitative methods such as structural equation modeling (SEM) or confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) across multiple public agencies. Comparative studies between public and private sectors, or between different regions of the country, could uncover context-sensitive insights and refine the framework's applicability. Longitudinal research designs could also explore how career advancement perceptions evolve over time, especially in relation to reforms, political changes, and digital transformations in the workplace. Additionally, future studies may incorporate employee voice and feedback mechanisms to validate whether the identified indicators align with employees' lived experiences across different organizational tiers.

For policy-makers and human resource managers within the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, the findings underscore the importance of a structured, transparent, and inclusive career development framework. Interventions should prioritize professional development through formal training, mentorship, and competency-based evaluations. Additionally, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that promotions and incentives are merit-based, inclusive, and clearly



communicated. Organizational culture should foster respect, innovation, and teamwork while addressing psychological needs such as meaning, belonging, and recognition. Importantly, the institution must balance personal aspirations with strategic national goals, thereby transforming career advancement into both a personal and public good.

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### Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

### Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

### Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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