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When War Enters Work: Job Insecurity, Personal Resources, and War-Related Anxiety Among Iranian Mental Health Professionals

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A B S T R A C T

Objective: This study examined the associations of quantitative and qualitative job insecurity, career adaptability, and agency-related personal resources with war-related anxiety among Iranian mental health professionals during a period of armed conflict.

Methods and Materials: A cross-sectional online survey was conducted in Iran from April 3 to April 19, 2026, using convenience recruitment among counselors and psychologists. Of 250 available records, five containing unexplained fractional item responses were excluded, yielding a primary analytic sample of 245 respondents. Measures assessed quantitative and qualitative job insecurity, career adaptability, an agency-related personal-resource composite comprising self-efficacy, optimism, and purposefulness, and war-related anxiety. Pearson correlations and standardized ordinary least-squares regression models were applied. Variance inflation factors, residual diagnostics, heteroskedasticity-consistent HC3 standard errors, post hoc coefficient contrasts, and sensitivity analyses were also conducted.

Findings: In the primary anxiety model, qualitative job insecurity was positively associated with war-related anxiety ($\beta = .307$, 95% CI [.183, .432], $p < .001$), whereas the association for quantitative job insecurity was not statistically significant ($\beta = .074$, 95% CI [−.041, .189], $p = .206$). Career adaptability ($\beta = -.228$, 95% CI [−.381, −.075], $p = .004$) and agency-related personal resources ($\beta = -.259$, 95% CI [−.376, −.141], $p < .001$) were negatively associated with anxiety. The model explained 55.3% of the variance. In the secondary model, career adaptability was positively associated with agency-related resources ($\beta = .576$, 95% CI [.429, .724], $p < .001$), whereas both insecurity dimensions were nonsignificant. HC3 and sensitivity analyses produced comparable patterns.

Conclusion: Qualitative threats to valued working conditions, rather than perceived job-loss risk alone, were associated with greater war-related anxiety, while career adaptability and agency-related personal resources were associated with lower anxiety. These findings support examining occupational threats and personal resources jointly during conflict, while the cross-sectional design precludes causal or mediational interpretations.

Keywords: *job insecurity; career adaptability; personal resources; war-related anxiety; mental health professionals; armed conflict*

1. Introduction

Armed conflict constitutes a profound disruption not only to physical security and social stability but also to the ordinary structures through which individuals organize work, income, professional identity, family life, and expectations about the future. The psychological consequences of war are therefore unlikely to arise exclusively from direct exposure to violence. They may also develop through the deterioration of everyday conditions, uncertainty regarding employment and financial security, interruption of social institutions, displacement, changing occupational demands, and the cumulative erosion of resources required for effective adaptation. This broader perspective is consistent with psychosocial approaches emphasizing that the mental-health consequences of conflict reflect an interaction between war-related exposure and the daily stressors generated or intensified by conflict (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). Meta-analytic evidence from war- and conflict-affected settings has demonstrated substantial levels of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress, indicating that psychological distress represents a major public-health concern in populations exposed to armed violence (Lim et al., 2022). More recent evidence from the war in Ukraine has similarly documented pronounced psychological consequences among civilians. Research comparing populations affected directly and indirectly by the Russo-Ukrainian war identified substantial symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2023), while studies of displaced civilians have illustrated the psychological burden associated with forced movement and insecurity during invasion (Ben-Ezra et al., 2023). Longitudinal evidence among Ukrainian parents has further demonstrated changes in mental health during the course of war, underscoring the dynamic nature of psychological reactions to prolonged conflict (Hyland et al., 2023). Nationwide evidence collected after the first year of the Russian invasion likewise revealed considerable levels of stress, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress symptoms, confirming that psychological strain can remain substantial beyond the immediate onset of armed confrontation (Lushchak et al., 2024).

Within such environments, mental health professionals occupy a particularly complex position. They are simultaneously members of conflict-affected communities and providers of psychological support to others experiencing fear, grief, displacement, uncertainty, and trauma. Their professional responsibilities may intensify precisely when their own resources are threatened. Evidence from Ukraine illustrates this dual burden. Psychosocial support professionals working during the war reported meaningful mental-health challenges, demonstrating that those responsible for supporting distressed populations are not insulated from the consequences of the same crisis (Kang et al., 2023). Research specifically examining mental health workers during the Russian-Ukrainian war has similarly emphasized concerns regarding their well-being under conditions of prolonged societal disruption (Kang et al., 2024). Helpline personnel providing psychological assistance during the 2022 Russian invasion also experienced substantial mental-health burdens, highlighting the emotional demands placed on professionals delivering crisis services during active conflict (Pinchuk et al., 2022). These observations are particularly relevant because wartime mental-health systems often depend on the sustained functioning of professionals who may themselves face threats to safety, income, working conditions, family well-being, and professional continuity. In Iran, the integration of a national crisis counseling hotline into the primary health-care network during armed conflict illustrates the increased importance of psychological services during periods of acute societal threat and the need for professionals capable of maintaining such services under rapidly changing conditions (Raeisi et al., 2026). Understanding the psychological functioning of mental health professionals during conflict therefore requires attention not only to their clinical responsibilities but also to the occupational environment in which those responsibilities are performed.

One occupational factor that may become especially salient under conditions of social and economic instability is job insecurity. Job insecurity broadly reflects an employee's perceived uncertainty regarding the future of employment and has become a central construct in research on occupational health and organizational behavior. A substantial body of research indicates that job insecurity is associated with adverse consequences for employee health, psychological well-being, work attitudes, and functioning (Shoss, 2017). Longitudinal evidence accumulated over several decades likewise supports an association between job insecurity and poorer health and well-being, while also illustrating the methodological difficulty of establishing unequivocal causal direction in observational research (De Witte et al., 2016). This distinction is especially important in crisis contexts, where job insecurity and psychological distress may arise from overlapping external circumstances.

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Armed conflict can disrupt organizations, reduce service continuity, alter payment arrangements, increase workloads, restrict mobility, interrupt communication, and produce uncertainty regarding both immediate and longer-term employment conditions. Consequently, occupational insecurity during war should not be understood solely as fear of unemployment; it may also involve apprehension about deterioration in the valued characteristics of existing work.

Contemporary job-insecurity research therefore distinguishes between quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Quantitative job insecurity concerns uncertainty about the continuation or loss of employment itself, whereas qualitative job insecurity concerns perceived threats to valued features of the job, such as career prospects, autonomy, working conditions, income progression, task quality, or opportunities for professional development. Empirical work deconstructing job insecurity has shown that these dimensions are related yet distinguishable and should not necessarily be treated as interchangeable components of a single construct (Urbanaviciute et al., 2021). This distinction may be particularly important during armed conflict. A mental health professional may believe that employment will technically continue while simultaneously anticipating deterioration in payment reliability, workload predictability, access to supervision, professional autonomy, service quality, workplace safety, or opportunities for advancement. Such losses may be psychologically consequential even when outright job loss is not perceived as imminent. In a crisis, therefore, qualitative insecurity may capture a form of occupational resource threat that is not adequately represented by a simple expectation of unemployment. Research linking financial concerns to health complaints and career-related behavior further illustrates how uncertainty about valued economic and occupational resources can become intertwined with well-being and career functioning (Schmitt et al., 2024). Examining the two dimensions separately may consequently provide a more precise account of how occupational insecurity is related to anxiety in workers functioning under conflict conditions.

Conservation of resources theory provides a useful framework for understanding these relationships. The theory proposes that individuals strive to obtain, preserve, and protect resources they value and that stress is especially likely when those resources are threatened, lost, or insufficiently replenished. Within organizational settings, resources may include material conditions, employment stability, social support, professional status, perceived competence, control, and psychological capacities that enable individuals to respond effectively to demands (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Armed conflict can be understood as an unusually intense resource-threatening environment because it may simultaneously affect personal safety, family security, finances, workplace conditions, institutional continuity, and expectations about the future. From this perspective, job insecurity represents one form of perceived resource threat embedded within the broader wartime environment. Concerns about losing employment or valued job characteristics may compound the uncertainty already produced by armed conflict, whereas personal resources may be associated with a greater perceived capacity to respond to change. Importantly, this framework does not imply that individual resources can neutralize objective danger or compensate for deteriorating employment conditions. Rather, it suggests that occupational threats and personal resources should be examined jointly when attempting to understand psychological strain.

Career adaptability represents one potentially important set of personal resources in this context. Within career construction theory, career adaptability refers to psychosocial resources that enable individuals to manage current and anticipated vocational tasks, transitions, disruptions, and changing occupational demands (Savickas, 2005). It is commonly conceptualized through four interrelated dimensions: concern, reflecting orientation toward the vocational future; control, referring to responsibility and influence over career-related decisions; curiosity, involving exploration of possible alternatives; and confidence, reflecting perceived capacity to pursue and manage occupational goals. The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale was developed to operationalize these dimensions and demonstrated reliability and measurement equivalence across multiple national contexts (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Career adaptability is therefore particularly relevant when career trajectories become uncertain or established professional routines are disrupted. A meta-analysis of the career-adaptability literature found systematic relationships between adaptability, adaptive dispositions, adapting responses, and positive adaptation outcomes, supporting its role as an important psychosocial resource in career development (Rudolph et al., 2017). More recent theorizing has extended this relevance to involuntary, radical, and socially undesirable career changes, emphasizing that adaptation may become especially important when occupational change is externally imposed rather than voluntarily pursued (Rudolph & Zacher, 2023). Wartime

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disruption represents an especially salient example of such externally imposed uncertainty, because professionals may have little control over changes in service demand, institutional operations, workplace access, financial arrangements, or broader labor-market conditions.

Career adaptability may be relevant to war-related anxiety because adaptable 1ndividuals may perceive greater capacity to respond to occupational uncertainty, consider alternatives, reorganize goals, and maintain a future orientation when established work patterns are disrupted. However, adaptability should not be conceptualized as equivalent to the absence of distress. A professional with strong adaptive resources may still experience substantial anxiety in the presence of genuine threats. Moreover, associations between adaptability and psychological outcomes may be reciprocal: lower anxiety may facilitate confidence and exploration, just as greater adaptability may correspond to better adjustment. For this reason, cross-sectional associations cannot establish that adaptability causally protects individuals from wartime anxiety. Nevertheless, examining adaptability alongside job insecurity can clarify whether occupational threats and career-related resources show distinct associations with anxiety when considered simultaneously. Such an approach also shifts attention away from explanations centered exclusively on vulnerability and toward the coexistence of resource loss and resource capacity during crisis.

A related but conceptually distinct domain involves agency-related personal resources. Agency concerns an individual's experienced or perceived capacity for purposeful action, although the construct has been conceptualized differently across philosophical, cognitive, and psychological traditions. Contemporary accounts of the sense of agency emphasize that experiences of control and authorship over actions cannot be reduced to a single mechanism and may arise from multiple prospective and retrospective processes (Synofzik et al., 2008). In applied psychological measurement, agency-related qualities may encompass self-efficacy, optimism, and purposefulness, all of which concern an individual's perceived ability to act effectively and maintain goal-directed behavior. Farahani and colleagues developed a Sense of Agency Inventory comprising these domains in a population of individuals with visual impairment, providing an empirical basis for assessing self-efficacy, optimism, and purposefulness together (Farahani et al., 2018). Because that measure was developed for a specific population, its application elsewhere warrants conceptual caution; nevertheless, its constituent domains are pertinent to understanding how individuals perceive their capacity to act under uncertainty. Self-efficacy may support confidence in handling demands, optimism may sustain expectations that purposeful action remains worthwhile, and purposefulness may support continued goal orientation when external conditions become unstable.

The relationship between these agency-related resources and career adaptability is also theoretically important. Both involve perceptions of competence, future orientation, and effective action, and therefore some empirical overlap is plausible. Career adaptability, however, is specifically oriented toward vocational tasks and transitions, whereas a composite of self-efficacy, optimism, and purposefulness reflects a broader set of action-related psychological resources. During armed conflict, these resources may become relevant because uncertainty can undermine perceived control and narrow expectations about future possibilities. At the same time, occupational conditions remain crucial. Organizational research suggests that supportive workplace environments can contribute meaningfully to favorable employee attitudes; for example, perceived organizational support has been examined as an important workplace factor in relation to job satisfaction (Edosomwan, 2022). Although evidence from non-conflict organizational settings cannot be directly generalized to war-related anxiety, it reinforces the broader principle that employee well-being should not be explained solely through individual characteristics. Personal resources operate within organizational and social contexts, and an exclusive focus on resilience may obscure the importance of secure and supportive working conditions.

War-related anxiety provides the context-specific psychological outcome through which these occupational and personal factors can be examined. General anxiety measures may capture broad psychological distress but may not adequately distinguish concerns that are specifically organized around armed conflict. The development and validation of a War Anxiety Scale reflects growing recognition that war-related psychological responses can include cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral manifestations directly connected to the experience or anticipation of conflict (Shomali Ahmadabadi & Barkhordari Ahmadabadi, 2025). This distinction is valuable when studying professionals functioning in a conflict environment because their anxiety may reflect an interrelated set of concerns about safety, family, social stability, work continuity, professional obligations, and

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future uncertainty. Evidence from recent conflicts indicates that anxiety and related psychological symptoms can be widespread across affected populations (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2023; Lushchak et al., 2024), but the pathways through which occupational circumstances correspond with war-specific anxiety remain comparatively underexamined. For mental health professionals, this question is particularly consequential because occupational demands may increase at the same time as the resources required to meet those demands are threatened.

Taken together, previous research provides strong evidence that armed conflict is associated with psychological distress, that job insecurity is relevant to employee health and well-being, and that career adaptability and other personal resources are important correlates of adjustment. However, these literatures have often developed in parallel. Conflict research has primarily emphasized trauma exposure and population-level mental-health consequences, whereas organizational research has generally examined job insecurity and career resources in more conventional employment environments. Studies of mental health professionals during war have begun to document the strain experienced by those delivering psychosocial services (Kang et al., 2023; Kang et al., 2024), yet less is known about how distinct forms of job insecurity and personal resources are simultaneously associated with war-related anxiety in this occupational group. Moreover, collapsing quantitative and qualitative insecurity may obscure theoretically meaningful differences between fear of losing employment and fear of losing valued characteristics of work. Similarly, considering career adaptability without accounting for broader agency-related resources may provide an incomplete account of the personal-resource domain. A resource-based framework therefore supports examining these constructs concurrently while maintaining appropriate caution about causal interpretation in cross-sectional data.

Accordingly, the aim of this study was to examine the associations of quantitative and qualitative job insecurity, career adaptability, and agency-related personal resources with war-related anxiety among Iranian mental health professionals during a period of armed conflict.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

The cross-sectional online survey was reportedly conducted in Iran between April 3 and April 19, 2026. The survey window encompassed active hostilities and the immediate period after the reported April 8 ceasefire (Raeisi et al., 2026). Individual response timestamps were unavailable, preventing analysis of variation across this interval. Direct exposure to conflict, displacement, injury, media exposure, income disruption, and interruption of work were not measured.

The recruitment account describes online convenience recruitment among counselors and psychologists in Tehran, Karaj, Shiraz, Ahvaz, and Isfahan. Intended eligibility criteria were professional practice in counseling or psychology, a relevant master's or doctoral degree, and electronic consent. Recruitment-flow, screening, demographic, professional, geographic, and individual consent fields were not retained in the available data. Consequently, respondent eligibility and the stated recruitment locations cannot be verified at the individual level. The findings are reported for survey respondents and are not treated as representative estimates for Iranian mental health professionals.

The available dataset comprised 250 distinct numbered records, 79 item-response fields, and 16 calculated subscale and total-score fields, with no empty fields. Five records contained 24 fractional values in fields expected to contain integer responses from 1 to 5. Their origin could not be established. All five records were excluded from the primary models, leaving 245 records; analyses of all 250 records were retained as sensitivity checks. This was a post hoc data-quality decision, not a prespecified exclusion rule or evidence that the remaining records have verified provenance. No item values were rounded, imputed, or altered.

2.2. Instruments

Job insecurity. Seven recorded items correspond to quantitative insecurity (three items) and qualitative insecurity (four items; Hellgren et al., 1999). The former concerns threatened employment continuity, and the latter threatened job characteristics. The recorded subscale means were analyzed separately in the primary models. A combined score giving equal weight to the two subscale means was used only in sensitivity analyses because this weighting could not be verified against the original scoring documentation. Higher values indicate greater insecurity. Item values range from 1 to 5; the administered verbal anchors and language adaptations could not be verified.

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Career adaptability. Career adaptability was assessed using the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale developed by Savickas and Porfeli (2012). The scale contains 24 items and assesses four dimensions: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, with six items for each dimension. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale, with higher scores indicating greater career adaptability. Internal consistency of the total item set is reported in Table 1.

Agency-related personal resources. Thirty-three recorded items correspond to self-efficacy (14 items), optimism (eight), and purposefulness (11) in the instrument developed by Farahani et al. (2018). Because its original validation concerned individuals with visual impairment, the current score is described as an agency-related personal-resource composite rather than a validated general measure of agency in this sample. The recorded total equally weights the three subscale scores; it is not the unweighted mean of all 33 items. Recorded item values range from 1 to 5. Small differences between stored subscale scores and recomputed item means, up to .005 in the full dataset, are consistent with rounding but cannot be attributed to a documented processing step. The scoring key and response anchors could not be checked against the administered questionnaire. Equal-item weighting was examined as a sensitivity analysis.

War-related anxiety. The study report attributes the 15-item measure to Shomali Ahmadabadi and Barkhordari Ahmadabadi (2025), with psychological-cognitive, physical, and behavioral dimensions. The recorded total equals the mean of its 15 items. The reported response anchors are 1 (never) to 5 (always), with higher scores denoting greater war-related anxiety. Bibliographic metadata for the scale could be located, but the original full-text scale report and the administered questionnaire were unavailable for item-by-item verification. Thus, the attribution, reported anchors, and correspondence between the administered items and the published instrument remain limitations; the score is not interpreted as a clinical diagnosis.

2.3. Data analysis

Primary analyses used the 245 records without fractional item responses. Means, standard deviations, Pearson correlations, and raw-item Cronbach alphas were calculated in that subset. Alpha describes internal consistency and does not establish dimensional or discriminant validity. Each model variable was standardized within its analytic sample using the sample standard deviation. Ordinary least-squares regression modeled war-related anxiety from quantitative insecurity, qualitative insecurity, career adaptability, and the agency-related composite. A secondary regression modeled the composite from both insecurity dimensions and adaptability. Intercepts were included. Conventional coefficient intervals and p values used Student's t distribution with n minus the number of fitted coefficients degrees of freedom.

Variance inflation factors (VIFs) and tolerance were calculated for each predictor. Residual checks included the Jarque–Bera normality test, the studentized Breusch–Pagan test (Koenker form), internally studentized residuals, leverage, and Cook's distance. Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors with the HC3 correction were calculated using model residuals and leverage values. Robust intervals and p values used the same residual degrees of freedom as the conventional models. These checks assess sensitivity of statistical inference; they do not resolve measurement error, omitted exposure variables, or uncertainty about the original records.

A post hoc contrast compared the standardized qualitative and quantitative insecurity coefficients within the anxiety model, using conventional and HC3 covariance estimates. Sensitivity analyses retained all 250 records, substituted the combined insecurity score in the 245-record subset, and rebuilt the agency-related composite with equal item weights. Tests were not adjusted for multiple comparisons. Explained variance describes the observed sample; out-of-sample prediction was not evaluated. The report focuses on conditional observed-score associations and does not estimate mediation.

3. Findings and Results

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics and internal-consistency estimates for the 245 retained records.

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics and raw-item internal consistency (N = 245)

Measure	Items	M	SD	α
Quantitative insecurity	3	4.00	0.80	.777
Qualitative insecurity	4	3.39	0.91	.869
Career adaptability	24	3.54	0.60	.916
Agency-related resources	33	3.61	0.58	.947
War-related anxiety	15	3.46	0.57	.862

Table 2 shows correlations. Career adaptability and agency-related resources were correlated at r = .686. This overlap warrants caution when interpreting adjusted coefficients as reflecting separate psychological resources. Internal consistency does not establish item-level validity or measurement equivalence in this population.

Table 2

Pearson correlations (N = 245)

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1. Quantitative insecurity	—				
2. Qualitative insecurity	.561	—			
3. Career adaptability	−.659	−.722	—		
4. Agency-related resources	−.515	−.532	.686	—	
5. War-related anxiety	.530	.651	−.676	−.617	—

In the dimension-specific anxiety model, qualitative insecurity showed a positive conditional association with anxiety (β = .307, SE = .063, 95% CI [.183, .432], p < .001). The quantitative insecurity estimate was positive but its interval included zero (β = .074, SE = .058, 95% CI [−.041, .189], p = .206). Adaptability (β = −.228, SE = .078, 95% CI [−.381, −.075], p = .004) and agency-related resources (β = −.259, SE = .060, 95% CI [−.376, −.141], p < .001) were negatively associated with anxiety. The model accounted for 55.3% of observed variance (Table 3).

In the secondary resource-composite model, adaptability was positively associated with the outcome (β = .576, 95% CI [.429, .724], p < .001). The quantitative (β = −.102, p = .104) and qualitative (β = −.059, p = .389) insecurity intervals included zero. This model accounted for 47.9% of observed variance. All coefficients describe associations among concurrently measured scores.

Table 3

Standardized regressions in the 245-record primary subset

Outcome	Predictor	β	95% CI	p
Anxiety	Quantitative insecurity	.074	[−.041, .189]	.206
Anxiety	Qualitative insecurity	.307	[.183, .432]	< .001
Anxiety	Career adaptability	−.228	[−.381, −.075]	.004
Anxiety	Agency-related resources	−.259	[−.376, −.141]	< .001
Resources	Quantitative insecurity	−.102	[−.226, .021]	.104
Resources	Qualitative insecurity	−.059	[−.193, .075]	.389
Resources	Career adaptability	.576	[.429, .724]	< .001

Anxiety-model VIFs ranged from 1.837 to 3.243, with tolerance from .308 to .545. Resource-composite-model VIFs ranged from 1.816 to 2.605, with tolerance from .384 to .551. These values indicate shared predictor variance and do not establish construct distinctiveness. HC3 intervals preserved the principal pattern: qualitative insecurity, adaptability, and agency-related resources had intervals excluding zero in the anxiety model; quantitative insecurity did not (Table 4).

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Table 4

Collinearity and HC3 sensitivity estimates (N = 245)

Outcome / predictor	VIF	Tol.	HC3 SE	HC3 95% CI	p
Anxiety / Quantitative insecurity	1.837	.545	.065	[−.054, .202]	.256
Anxiety / Qualitative insecurity	2.155	.464	.067	[.176, .439]	< .001
Anxiety / Career adaptability	3.243	.308	.081	[−.387, −.069]	.005
Anxiety / Agency-related resources	1.921	.521	.063	[−.383, −.135]	< .001
Resources / Quantitative insecurity	1.816	.551	.056	[−.213, .008]	.070
Resources / Qualitative insecurity	2.149	.465	.065	[−.186, .069]	.366
Resources / Career adaptability	2.605	.384	.081	[.416, .737]	< .001

The studentized Breusch–Pagan tests did not clearly indicate heteroskedasticity (anxiety: LM = 7.487, p = .112; resources: LM = 3.381, p = .336), but residual normality was rejected by Jarque–Bera tests (JB = 14.558, p < .001; JB = 20.832, p < .001, respectively). Maximum absolute internally studentized residuals were 3.616 and 4.306. Maximum leverage was .087 and .063, and maximum Cook's distance was .083 and .064. Ten and 11 records, respectively, exceeded the descriptive Cook's-distance reference of 4/n. These records were not removed solely on that basis. HC3 inference is a sensitivity check rather than proof that linear-model assumptions or influence concerns are fully resolved.

The qualitative-minus-quantitative standardized anxiety coefficient contrast was .233 (conventional 95% CI [.051, .416], p = .012; HC3 95% CI [.027, .440], p = .027). This exploratory, multiplicity-unadjusted comparison describes conditional standardized coefficients, not a difference in causal effects. A zero-inclusive quantitative interval does not establish that quantitative insecurity is unrelated to anxiety in the population.

Retaining all 250 records yielded anxiety-model coefficients of .312 for qualitative insecurity, .073 for quantitative insecurity, −.228 for adaptability, and −.258 for agency-related resources (R^2 = .558). These results were close to the 245-record estimates. Agreement between subsets does not establish the origin of the fractional entries or verify the remaining records.

Using the equally weighted combined insecurity score in the 245-record anxiety model yielded β = .333 (95% CI [.194, .472]) for combined insecurity, β = −.241 (95% CI [−.395, −.087]) for career adaptability, and β = −.254 (95% CI [−.373, −.135]) for agency-related resources (R^2 = .544).

Using an equal-item resource composite in the dimension-specific anxiety model yielded β = .071 (95% CI [−.044, .186]) for quantitative insecurity, β = .306 (95% CI [.181, .430]) for qualitative insecurity, β = −.225 (95% CI [−.378, −.072]) for career adaptability, and β = −.266 (95% CI [−.385, −.148]) for agency-related resources (R^2 = .555). The similarity of these post hoc results indicates limited sensitivity to the examined weighting choices; it does not validate either scoring scheme.

4. Discussion

The present study examined the associations of quantitative and qualitative job insecurity, career adaptability, and agency-related personal resources with war-related anxiety among Iranian mental health professionals during a period of armed conflict. The findings showed that qualitative job insecurity was positively and significantly associated with war-related anxiety, whereas quantitative job insecurity did not retain a statistically significant conditional association after the other predictors were considered. In contrast, both career adaptability and agency-related personal resources were negatively associated with war-related anxiety. The regression model explained 55.3% of the observed variance in anxiety, suggesting that the simultaneous consideration of occupational insecurity and personal resources captured a substantial proportion of individual differences in the outcome within the analytic sample. In the secondary model, career adaptability was strongly and positively associated with agency-related personal resources, whereas neither dimension of job insecurity showed a statistically significant conditional association with the resource composite. Robust HC3 estimates and sensitivity analyses yielded a similar pattern, indicating that the principal findings were relatively stable across alternative analytic specifications.

The positive association between qualitative job insecurity and war-related anxiety is one of the most important findings of the study. Qualitative job insecurity reflects concern about losing valued aspects of work, including professional autonomy, favorable working

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conditions, role quality, income prospects, opportunities for career development, and other characteristics that make employment psychologically and materially meaningful. Previous research has shown that qualitative and quantitative insecurity represent related but distinct forms of occupational threat and may have different implications for employee well-being (Urbanaviciute et al., 2021). The present finding is consistent with this distinction. During armed conflict, mental health professionals may remain formally employed while nevertheless facing substantial deterioration in the quality, predictability, safety, or sustainability of their work. Concerns regarding changing workloads, interrupted service delivery, financial instability, limited access to supervision, altered professional responsibilities, or reduced career opportunities may therefore become particularly salient. From this perspective, the anxiety associated with war may be intensified not merely by the possibility of unemployment, but by the anticipated erosion of the characteristics that make continued employment stable, manageable, and professionally meaningful.

This interpretation is also compatible with the broader job-insecurity literature. Job insecurity has repeatedly been associated with poorer psychological health and reduced well-being (Shoss, 2017), while longitudinal evidence has demonstrated persistent links between insecurity and adverse health-related outcomes (De Witte et al., 2016). The present findings extend this general pattern to a conflict-affected occupational context by suggesting that the perceived degradation of work conditions may be especially relevant to war-related anxiety. Moreover, Schmitt and colleagues showed that financial concerns can be associated with health complaints and career-related responses, illustrating how uncertainty about economic and occupational resources may become psychologically consequential (Schmitt et al., 2024). In wartime settings, uncertainty regarding salary continuity, service demand, workload, mobility, organizational support, and professional opportunities may combine with broader safety concerns. Qualitative insecurity may therefore operate as an additional layer of stress within an already resource-threatening environment.

By contrast, the conditional association between quantitative job insecurity and war-related anxiety was not statistically significant. This does not necessarily indicate that perceived threat of job loss is irrelevant to anxiety. Quantitative insecurity was positively correlated with war-related anxiety at the bivariate level, but its adjusted regression coefficient became small and statistically nonsignificant when qualitative insecurity, career adaptability, and agency-related resources were entered simultaneously. One interpretation is that the variance in war-related anxiety specifically associated with concern over losing employment may overlap with broader concerns about the deterioration of working conditions. Quantitative and qualitative insecurity were moderately correlated, and both may arise from common contextual threats. Once qualitative insecurity and personal resources were controlled, the remaining unique contribution of quantitative insecurity may have been limited. This finding is broadly compatible with research showing that the two dimensions of insecurity should not automatically be assumed to have identical relationships with employee outcomes (Urbanaviciute et al., 2021). The post hoc contrast in the present study also indicated that the standardized coefficient for qualitative insecurity was significantly larger than that for quantitative insecurity, although this comparison should be interpreted cautiously because it was exploratory and not adjusted for multiple testing.

The importance of qualitative insecurity can also be understood within conservation of resources theory. This framework proposes that stress develops when valued resources are threatened, lost, or insufficiently replenished and that resource loss can have particularly strong psychological consequences (Hobfoll et al., 2018). During war, the threatened resources of mental health professionals may extend far beyond employment status itself. Stable schedules, income reliability, professional identity, confidence in organizational continuity, access to colleagues, control over working conditions, and opportunities to perform work effectively may all become uncertain. Under such circumstances, perceived deterioration in job quality may function as a meaningful indicator of broader resource loss. This interpretation also aligns with psychosocial perspectives on armed conflict that emphasize the contribution of daily stressors, institutional disruption, and socioeconomic adversity alongside direct exposure to traumatic events (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). The present results therefore support a view of war-related anxiety that incorporates occupational conditions into the wider ecology of conflict-related stress.

The negative association between career adaptability and war-related anxiety provides a second important finding. Career adaptability encompasses psychosocial resources that facilitate coping with career tasks, occupational transitions, uncertainty, and disruption (Savickas, 2005). Its dimensions

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of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence may be particularly relevant when professional circumstances change unexpectedly. The development of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale established career adaptability as a measurable multidimensional resource applicable across occupational and cultural contexts (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). In the current study, greater adaptability was associated with lower war-related anxiety even after both dimensions of job insecurity and agency-related resources were taken into account. This pattern is consistent with the broader evidence showing that career adaptability is associated with beneficial adaptation outcomes and constructive responses to career challenges (Rudolph et al., 2017).

The result is also consistent with the growing literature on adaptation to involuntary and undesirable occupational change. Rudolph and Zacher emphasized that career adaptation is particularly relevant when changes are radical, externally imposed, or socially undesirable rather than freely chosen (Rudolph & Zacher, 2023). Armed conflict exemplifies such a context because professionals may be required to reorganize work, alter service delivery, manage unexpected demands, or reconsider future plans in response to events outside their control. Individuals with stronger adaptability may be better able to maintain future orientation, consider alternative strategies, perceive some degree of control over career-related decisions, and retain confidence in responding to emerging challenges. These psychological orientations may correspond with lower war-related anxiety, even though they cannot eliminate objective risks created by armed conflict.

The negative association between agency-related personal resources and war-related anxiety similarly supports a resource-based interpretation. The resource composite in the present study comprised self-efficacy, optimism, and purposefulness. These characteristics may contribute to a stronger perceived capacity for purposeful action under uncertain conditions. Farahani and colleagues conceptualized these components within a measure of agency developed for individuals with visual impairment, emphasizing self-efficacy, optimism, and purposefulness as interconnected aspects of perceived agency (Farahani et al., 2018). Although the use of this measure in the present occupational population requires caution, the observed association is conceptually plausible. Individuals who perceive themselves as more capable of effective action, retain more positive expectations, and maintain goal direction may report less intense anxiety when faced with uncertainty. In cognitive and philosophical accounts, the sense of agency also involves experiences of control and authorship over action, although such experiences arise from multiple interacting processes rather than a single mechanism (Synofzik et al., 2008). During war, when external circumstances can sharply restrict objective control, perceived personal capacity may remain psychologically relevant even if it does not alter the external threat itself.

At the same time, the strong positive association between career adaptability and the agency-related resource composite deserves careful interpretation. In the secondary regression model, adaptability was positively associated with agency-related resources, whereas quantitative and qualitative job insecurity were not statistically significant predictors after adjustment. The correlation between adaptability and the resource composite was also substantial. This is theoretically understandable because career adaptability includes confidence and control, while the agency-related composite includes self-efficacy, optimism, and purposefulness. Both constructs therefore capture partly overlapping capacities for effective, future-oriented, goal-directed functioning. The finding should not be taken to mean that the constructs are interchangeable. Instead, it suggests that people who perceive themselves as better equipped to manage vocational change also tend to report stronger general action-related resources. Previous research has demonstrated that adaptability relates to adaptive psychological characteristics and adjustment processes (Rudolph et al., 2017), supporting the plausibility of this relationship.

The findings also need to be interpreted against the broader literature on mental health during armed conflict. War exposure is consistently associated with elevated psychological distress, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress (Lim et al., 2022). Studies conducted during the Russo-Ukrainian war have documented substantial mental-health burdens across civilian populations (Chudzicka-Czupała et al., 2023), displaced individuals (Ben-Ezra et al., 2023), parents exposed to prolonged conflict (Hyland et al., 2023), and nationwide samples assessed after sustained warfare (Lushchak et al., 2024). These studies demonstrate that anxiety during armed conflict occurs within a wider constellation of threats involving safety, displacement, family disruption, economic uncertainty, and loss of normality. The present findings add an occupational perspective by indicating that perceived working conditions and personal career resources are also associated with war-

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related anxiety. Because direct exposure to conflict was not measured, however, the current results cannot determine the extent to which job insecurity and personal resources operate independently of differences in actual war exposure.

The occupational group examined here is especially relevant because mental health professionals may experience a dual burden during conflict. Studies in Ukraine have documented psychological strain among psychosocial support professionals (Kang et al., 2023), mental health workers (Kang et al., 2024), and helpline staff working during the Russian invasion (Pinchuk et al., 2022). These professionals are expected to assist others while experiencing many of the same social and personal threats themselves. Increased demand for psychological services may coincide with workforce shortages, organizational disruption, emotional overload, and uncertainty about service continuity. In Iran, the implementation of a national crisis counseling hotline during armed conflict demonstrates the importance of maintaining mental health services during periods of acute instability (Raeisi et al., 2026). The current findings suggest that attention to the well-being of professionals involved in such services should include not only general psychological distress but also employment conditions, perceived career capacity, and personal resources.

The use of a war-specific anxiety measure is also important in interpreting the findings. War-related anxiety can include psychological-cognitive, physical, and behavioral responses specifically linked to conflict and its anticipated consequences (Shomali Ahmadabadi & Barkhordari Ahmadabadi, 2025). This specificity may help explain why occupational uncertainties related to the quality and sustainability of professional life were associated with anxiety. In wartime, employment conditions are not isolated from the conflict environment; they become part of the broader set of uncertainties through which individuals experience war. Thus, concerns about professional continuity, meaningful work, income, service delivery, and future career prospects may form part of a wider network of war-related worries rather than representing independent occupational stressors.

Another implication of the findings is that individual resources and organizational conditions should be considered together rather than treated as competing explanations. The negative associations of adaptability and agency-related resources with anxiety do not imply that workers should simply become more resilient in the face of deteriorating conditions. Conservation of resources theory emphasizes that personal resources exist within broader environmental systems of gain and loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Similarly, organizational research has shown that supportive workplace conditions can contribute to positive employee outcomes, including job satisfaction (Edosomwan, 2022). Although organizational support was not measured in the present study, the combined pattern suggests that psychological functioning during conflict may reflect both the availability of personal resources and the stability of the work environment. Supporting employees therefore requires attention to both domains.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the findings are consistent with a resource-oriented interpretation of psychological strain during conflict. Qualitative job insecurity represented a significant occupational correlate of greater war-related anxiety, while career adaptability and agency-related personal resources were associated with lower anxiety. Quantitative insecurity did not show an independent conditional association once these factors were considered. The results suggest that what employees fear losing about the quality and structure of their work may be at least as important as whether they expect to lose the job itself. At the same time, career-related and agency-related resources appear relevant to how professionals experience wartime uncertainty. These conclusions remain associative rather than causal, but they indicate that the study of mental health professionals during conflict may benefit from integrating occupational-health, career-development, and conflict-psychology perspectives.

6. Limitations & Suggestions

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the cross-sectional design prevents determination of temporal sequence and does not permit causal conclusions regarding whether job insecurity increases anxiety or whether more anxious respondents perceive greater insecurity and fewer personal resources. Second, the sample was obtained through online convenience recruitment, and individual occupational eligibility, geographic location, demographic characteristics, and recruitment-flow information could not be independently verified; consequently, the findings should not be regarded as representative of Iranian mental health professionals as a whole. Third, direct exposure to armed conflict, displacement, injury, harm to family members, media exposure, income loss, and actual disruption of

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employment were not measured, leaving important potential confounding variables unaccounted for. Fourth, the survey period spanned active hostilities and the immediate post-ceasefire period, but individual response timestamps were unavailable, preventing analysis of temporal variation in anxiety across this changing context. Fifth, the agency-related composite was derived from an instrument originally developed in a different population, and substantial overlap between this composite and career adaptability raises questions regarding discriminant validity. Sixth, the exact administered version and scoring documentation for some measures could not be fully verified. Finally, the analyses were not preregistered, several decisions were made after the full-sample results were known, residual normality was not supported, and multiple comparisons were not formally adjusted, all of which reduce the strength of confirmatory inference.

Future studies should use longitudinal and, where feasible, prospective designs to clarify the temporal relationships among job insecurity, personal resources, and war-related anxiety. Repeated assessments beginning during acute conflict and extending through ceasefire and post-conflict recovery would help determine whether changes in employment conditions and psychological resources correspond with changes in anxiety over time. Future research should recruit clearly verified occupational samples using documented eligibility procedures and retain demographic, professional, geographic, and response-time information while maintaining appropriate confidentiality. Direct indicators of conflict exposure should also be incorporated, including proximity to attacks, displacement, injury, family harm, media exposure, financial disruption, workload change, interruption of clinical services, and changes in employment status. Measurement research is needed to validate war-anxiety instruments and agency-related resource measures across occupational groups and to examine the discriminant validity of career adaptability, self-efficacy, optimism, and purposefulness. Structural equation modeling with adequately validated latent variables could be used to test more complex theoretical models once temporal ordering is established. Comparative studies across professions, regions, conflict intensities, and national contexts would also help determine whether the present pattern is specific to mental health workers or represents a broader occupational response to armed conflict. Future studies should additionally examine organizational resources such as supervisor support, communication quality, workload management, payment continuity, occupational safety, collegial support, and access to professional supervision.

For practice, organizations employing mental health professionals during armed conflict should address both employment conditions and individual support needs. Managers should provide clear and frequent communication regarding service continuity, contractual arrangements, payment procedures, workload expectations, scheduling, safety protocols, and anticipated changes in professional responsibilities. Because anxiety was more strongly associated with threats to valued job characteristics than with the threat of job loss itself, maintaining predictability, professional autonomy, role clarity, supervision, and reasonable workloads may be especially important. Institutions should also establish confidential psychological support, peer-support mechanisms, regular professional supervision, and procedures for identifying staff experiencing excessive strain. Career-support initiatives may help professionals consider alternative service-delivery methods, maintain a sense of vocational direction, and prepare for changing occupational demands. Training designed to strengthen problem solving, realistic future planning, self-efficacy, and purposeful action may also be useful, provided that such initiatives are not used as substitutes for secure working conditions. Organizational responses should therefore combine practical employment protections with psychological and professional support rather than placing responsibility for adaptation solely on individual workers.

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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.

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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