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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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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the paragraph beginning “A published account of Iran’s mental health response dates the onset of armed conflict…”, the manuscript relies on a highly specific conflict chronology, including the stated dates of February 28, 2026, April 8, 2026, and the survey period of April 3–19. This temporal framing is critical because the data collection reportedly crossed from active hostilities into the immediate post-ceasefire period. The authors should explain more explicitly how this changing context may have affected the dependent variable and predictor scores. Because individual response timestamps were unavailable, the manuscript should discuss the possibility that respondents completing the survey before versus after April 8 may have differed systematically in anxiety, perceived insecurity, and perceived resources. This is not merely a general limitation; it is a plausible source of uncontrolled temporal heterogeneity in the primary estimates.

In the paragraph stating that “armed conflict is treated as a resource-threatening context”, the application of conservation of resources theory would benefit from greater conceptual precision. The manuscript currently positions quantitative insecurity, qualitative insecurity, career adaptability, and agency-related resources within a general resource framework, but it does not

clearly distinguish resource threat, resource possession, and resource loss. The authors should specify which constructs represent threatened resources and which represent personal resource reservoirs. More importantly, they should avoid suggesting a process of resource loss unless actual change in resources was measured. The present study assesses concurrent perceptions rather than loss trajectories; therefore, the theoretical language should consistently refer to perceived resource threat and resource availability rather than inferred resource depletion.

In the Measures subsection for job insecurity, the sentence "the administered verbal anchors and language adaptations could not be verified" substantially limits measurement interpretability. Because respondents were recruited in Iran, it is essential to clarify the language in which the questionnaire was administered, how translated items were produced, and whether a validated Persian version was used. If the translation cannot be reconstructed, this should be stated explicitly and treated as a major measurement limitation. The same concern applies to other scales. Internal consistency estimates cannot compensate for uncertainty about item wording or translation equivalence, particularly when the primary inference depends on distinguishing quantitative from qualitative insecurity.

In the Career Adaptability subsection, the manuscript reports the use of the 24-item Career Adapt-Abilities Scale but analyzes only the total score. Given that the theoretical account specifically invokes concern, control, curiosity, and confidence, the authors should justify why subscale-level information was not examined. This is especially pertinent because control and confidence may overlap conceptually with self-efficacy and the agency-related resource composite. If subscale scores are available, reporting their correlations with the agency-related measure would clarify where the observed overlap originates. If they are unavailable or were not prespecified for analysis, the authors should explicitly state this and explain why the total score was considered the most defensible operationalization.

In the War-Related Anxiety subsection, the manuscript states that "the attribution, reported anchors, and correspondence between the administered items and the published instrument remain limitations." This is a serious issue for the principal outcome variable. The authors should explain exactly what evidence supports identifying the recorded 15 items as the War Anxiety Scale developed by Shomali Ahmadabadi and Barkhordari Ahmadabadi. If only bibliographic metadata and a stored variable label are available, the manuscript should avoid implying item-level verification. It would also be useful to report whether the observed score distribution, scoring range, and internal consistency are consistent with those described in the original scale publication. Any comparison should be framed as descriptive corroboration rather than validation of instrument identity.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph beginning "Job insecurity concerns uncertainty about the continuity or quality of employment," the distinction between quantitative and qualitative insecurity is appropriately introduced, but the manuscript should develop more explicit hypotheses regarding why their associations with war-related anxiety might differ. The results ultimately show a meaningful difference between the two coefficients, yet the Introduction largely presents both dimensions as expected positive predictors. The authors should clarify whether theory supports a stronger role for qualitative insecurity in this specific occupational context, particularly because mental health professionals may retain formal employment during crises while experiencing deterioration in workload, autonomy, payment reliability, supervision, work safety, and service quality. Providing this theoretical differentiation prospectively would reduce the impression that the stronger qualitative-insecurity effect is being rationalized only after observing the results.

In the paragraph beginning "The agency-related measure requires particular care," the authors appropriately acknowledge that the Farahani et al. instrument was developed for visually impaired individuals and is not an established general measure of agency. However, this concern is substantial enough to require a clearer measurement rationale. The manuscript should explain why this instrument was selected for Iranian mental health professionals, whether any content adaptation occurred,

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whether the original response format was preserved, and whether evidence exists for its use outside the population in which it was developed. The current label "agency-related personal-resource composite" is appropriately cautious, but relabeling alone does not resolve questions about construct validity. The authors should therefore distinguish between the reliability of the recorded score and evidence that the score validly represents the intended psychological construct in the present population.

In the Study Aims and Expectations paragraph, the sentence "Neither the expectations nor the analyses were preregistered" is commendably transparent, but the authors should explain the status of the stated hypotheses more carefully. The manuscript subsequently notes that "the decision to prioritize separate insecurity dimensions and exclude records with fractional item values was made during manuscript revision, after the full-sample results were known." This creates a significant distinction between genuinely a priori hypotheses and post hoc hypothesis-guided analyses. I recommend revising the language throughout the manuscript so that the primary regression is not inadvertently presented as confirmatory. The authors should identify which expectations existed before inspecting the data, which analytic choices emerged during revision, and which tests—including the qualitative-versus-quantitative insecurity contrast—should explicitly be regarded as exploratory.

In the Recruitment and Analytic Sample paragraph, the statement that "respondent eligibility and the stated recruitment locations cannot be verified at the individual level" raises a fundamental concern about the description of the sample. The title and several sections refer to "Iranian mental health professionals," yet the available dataset apparently contains no retained occupational, educational, geographical, screening, or demographic variables capable of confirming this characterization. The authors should reconsider whether the title and inferential language are sufficiently qualified. At minimum, the Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion should consistently describe the participants as respondents recruited as mental health professionals rather than verified mental health professionals. The manuscript should also explain whether the absence of these variables reflects noncollection, loss during data management, anonymization, or lack of access to the original survey export.

The paragraph reporting that "five records contained 24 fractional values in fields expected to contain integer responses from 1 to 5" requires additional methodological detail. The exclusion is potentially reasonable, but readers need to understand the pattern of anomalous values. Please report which measures contained the fractional responses, their numerical range, whether multiple anomalous values clustered within particular cases or instruments, and whether the affected values could plausibly have resulted from averaging, recoding, interpolation, data export, or previous transformation. The authors appropriately retain all 250 records in sensitivity analyses, but the post hoc nature of the exclusion makes transparency particularly important. A supplementary table identifying the affected variables without exposing participant-level information would materially improve reproducibility.

In the Ethical Considerations paragraph, the sentence "No prospective ethics approval or formal written exemption was obtained" represents a major issue that warrants fuller treatment. The explanation that wartime disruption made the accessible ethics-review process unavailable does not itself establish ethical exemption. The manuscript should state whether the research was affiliated with an institution that normally requires approval, whether any retrospective consultation with an ethics body occurred, what legal or institutional framework governed the study, how informed consent was documented at the time of collection, and how confidentiality and data security were maintained. Because individual consent records are also unavailable, the journal may require further documentation before publication. The ethical status should therefore be presented as a substantive governance issue rather than only as one of several general limitations.

Authors revised and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.
Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.

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