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Structural Equation Modeling of Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction with the Mediating Role of Social Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Case Study: Educational-Therapeutic

Staff of Teaching Hospitals in Tabriz)

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to model the structural equation relationships between personality traits and job satisfaction, with the mediating role of social support among the educational-therapeutic staff of teaching hospitals in Tabriz.

Methodology: This study was a descriptive-correlational research utilizing structural equation modeling. The statistical population comprised 8,500 educational-therapeutic staff members of teaching hospitals in Tabriz during 2020–2021. The sampling method was cluster sampling, and the sample size, determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, was 384 participants. Data were collected using the NEO Personality Inventory, the Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire, and the Perceived Social Support Scale. Data analysis was conducted using correlation coefficients and structural equation modeling.

Findings: The findings indicated a significant positive relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction, as well as between social support and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the mediating role of social support in the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction was confirmed. Accordingly, it is concluded that considering employees' personality traits can improve the work environment and enhance their job satisfaction. Additionally, the role of social support as a mediator highlights the importance of creating a supportive atmosphere in the workplace.

Conclusion: Therefore, organizations should design social support programs for their employees to strengthen self-esteem and coping abilities, ultimately contributing to increased job satisfaction.

Keywords: Social support, job satisfaction, structural equation modeling, personality traits, COVID-19 pandemic

1 Introduction

he sudden onset of a potentially life-threatening disease such as COVID-19 has placed an extraordinary burden on nursing staff, leading to increased workload, physical fatigue, inadequate personal protective equipment, fear of infection and transmitting the virus to family members (Alhawatmeh, 2025), disruption of worklife balance, neglect of personal and family needs, and a lack of up-to-date information about a new disease. The detrimental impact on nurses directly in contact with infected or suspected COVID-19 patients has been particularly significant. The fear of infection and eventual contraction of the virus among healthcare workers is alarming: at least 7,000 healthcare workers worldwide lost their lives due to SARS-CoV-2 infection, while thousands of those infected were nurses (Hassan & Majeed, 2024; Kwon & Song, 2024). A meta-analysis of 13 global studies, including data from 33,062 participants, found that over 23% of healthcare workers experienced anxiety. Similarly, 23% suffered from depression, and 39% faced insomnia issues (Alhawatmeh, 2025). Consequently, the combination of these stressors, which affect the psychological well-being of healthcare workers, led to job dissatisfaction and posttraumatic stress disorder during the COVID-19 pandemic (Abdulmohdi, 2024; Diannita et al., 2024).

The Big Five personality traits have been identified as important predictors of job satisfaction and social adjustment during the COVID-19 pandemic (Li et al., 2025). The Five-Factor Model of Personality, introduced by McCrae and Costa (1985), includes five main personality dimensions: neuroticism, extraversion, openness experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness. Extraversion. agreeableness, conscientiousness. openness to experience are recognized as active personality traits (Li & Kai, 2020). For instance, an individual with high extraversion is typically energetic, warm, and sociable, exhibiting a high level of assertiveness. Agreeableness encompasses positive emotions such as sympathy, empathy, compassion, kindness, and adaptability. Conscientiousness refers to traits such as reliability, organization, perseverance, and precision, whereas openness to experience reflects characteristics such as self-sufficiency, curiosity, and creativity (Ok et al., 2023; Weerasekara & Perera, 2024).

Educational-therapeutic staff who possess these positive traits are more likely to demonstrate greater commitment to their professional goals and engage more effectively with colleagues and patients, experiencing fewer negative emotional reactions such as emotional exhaustion (Dehghan Harati et al., 2024; Fakhri et al., 2021). These optimistic characteristics generally and positively influence their level of job satisfaction. In contrast, neuroticism is associated with negative traits such as anxiety, worry, fear, irritability, anger, and despair (Malek & Soltani, 2015; Shari'atnejad et al., 2019). Therefore, individuals with high levels of neuroticism may exhibit emotional instability and struggle to regulate their emotions effectively (Fakhri et al., 2021; Shari'atnejad et al., 2019).

Following the World Health Organization's declaration of the COVID-19 outbreak, many countries implemented public health measures, including social distancing and isolation, which helped reduce the spread of the disease (Fakhri et al., 2021). However, mental health experts have highlighted the potential negative effects of these measures on mental health based on experiences from previous disease outbreaks (Rahgoi, 2024; Uye et al., 2024). Social support can play a crucial role in alleviating COVID-19-related stress among educational-therapeutic staff (Abdulmohdi, 2024). Social support is defined as the provision of care, information, assistance, and resources to individuals, facilitating their adaptation to stressors (Xu et al., 2023; Zarrin Kolak et al., 2023). Social support is a key factor in mitigating the adverse effects of stress. Previous research has shown that this type of support can improve individuals' physical and mental health, enhance their ability to cope with chronic illnesses, and reduce mortality rates. People with higher levels of social support are generally more resilient to stressful situations and experience greater emotional wellbeing (Abdulmohdi, 2024).

Recent studies have examined the role of perceived social support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings indicate that higher perceived social support from family members is associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety (Gul et al., 2025; M.Y et al., 2025; Mardani et al., 2025; Mi et al., 2025; Nasab et al., 2025; Yan et al., 2024; Yang, 2024). Additionally, medical staff who report higher levels of social support experience increased self-efficacy and sleep quality while exhibiting reduced anxiety and stress (Alameri et al., 2024; Mansouri et al., 2025; Rezaei, 2023). Thus, increasing perceived social support levels may mitigate the effects of social isolation and distancing measures (Adnan Kamel et al., 2024; Rahgoi, 2024; Uye et al., 2024). The present study holds significant importance and necessity. The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected individuals' mental health, particularly among educational-therapeutic staff. Examining personality traits and job satisfaction in this

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context can help identify factors that improve their psychological and occupational well-being. Furthermore, social support is recognized as a key factor in reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction. This study aims to provide a better understanding of how social support influences personality traits and job satisfaction. Using structural equation modeling allows for the identification of complex relationships between variables, as well as hidden patterns and interconnections among personality traits, social support, and job satisfaction. Therefore, the findings of this study can assist hospital administrators and policymakers in designing effective support programs for educationaltherapeutic staff. During the COVID-19 pandemic, educational-therapeutic staff faced serious challenges and significant psychological pressures that may have impacted their mental health and job satisfaction. Personality traits and social support are recognized as influential factors in stress reduction and job satisfaction. However, there is limited research that simultaneously examines these variables in specific conditions such as a pandemic. Hence, this study investigates the relationships among personality traits, social support, and job satisfaction among the educationaltherapeutic staff of teaching hospitals in Tabriz. The primary research question is: What is the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction in this population, and how does social support, as a mediating variable, influence these relationships?

2 Methods and Materials

This study was applied in terms of its objective, descriptive-correlational in terms of data collection, and based on structural equation modeling. In terms of data nature, it was a quantitative study. The statistical population consisted of all educational-therapeutic staff of teaching hospitals in Tabriz in 2020–2021, totaling 8,500 individuals. Using cluster sampling and based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, a sample of 384 participants was randomly selected.

The instruments used in this study included the following questionnaires:

NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R): The revised version of the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R) was developed by McCrae and Costa in 1985. This inventory consists of 60 items and evaluates five major personality traits: Neuroticism (items 1, 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, 31, 36, 41, 46, 51, 56), Extraversion (items 2, 7, 12, 17, 22, 27, 32, 37, 42, 47, 52, 57), Openness to Experience (items 3, 8, 13, 18, 23,

28, 33, 38, 43, 48, 53, 58), Agreeableness (items 4, 9, 14, 19, 24, 29, 34, 39, 44, 49, 54, 59), and Conscientiousness (items 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60). Each factor is associated with six sub-traits, providing a comprehensive assessment of an individual's personality. The validity of this questionnaire has been confirmed based on concurrent use with Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire, with a reliability coefficient of 0.67 (Grossi Farshi, Mehryar, & Ghazi Tabatabai, 2001). Additionally, Banisi's (2016) study reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the five personality traits ranging from 0.68 to 0.86.

Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ): The MSQ consists of 19 items and six subscales designed to assess job satisfaction. These subscales include Payment System (3 items), Job Type (4 items), Promotion Opportunities (3 items), Organizational Climate (2 items), Leadership Style (4 items), and Physical Conditions (3 items). The scoring of this questionnaire is based on a Likert scale, with responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," assigned scores from 1 to 5, respectively. The reliability of this questionnaire, measured using Cronbach's alpha, was reported as 0.86 (Mohammadi, 2011). Additionally, in a study by Bakhtiar Nasrabadi, Rajaeepour, Salimi, Taherpour, and Partoavi (2009), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire was reported as 0.92, indicating high reliability of the instrument used in this study.

Perceived Social Support Questionnaire: The Perceived Social Support Questionnaire, developed by Zimet, Powell, Farley, Werkman, and Berkoff (1990), is a multidimensional tool for assessing social support in three primary domains: family, friends, and significant others. This questionnaire comprises 12 items, each rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (7). Brower, Emsley, Kidd, Lochner, and Seedat (2008) examined the internal reliability of this tool using Cronbach's alpha in a sample of 788 high school students, with results indicating reliability coefficients ranging from 0.86 to 0.90 for subscales and 0.86 for the overall scale. Additionally, in a study by Salimi, Jokar, and Nikpour (2009), Cronbach's alpha coefficients for perceived social support from family, friends, and significant others were reported as 0.89, 0.86, and 0.82, respectively.

In this study, ethical principles were strictly followed, including obtaining informed consent from participants either in written or verbal form, maintaining confidentiality of information, and ensuring the responsible use of data and resources. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version



28 and PLS version 4 software. The analyses included Pearson's correlation coefficient test and structural equation modeling.

3 Findings and Results

 Table 1

 Results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

To examine the normality of data distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used. As shown in Table 1, the results indicated that the data followed a normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests were employed for hypothesis testing.

Variables	Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	Significance Level	Test Result
Personality Traits	0.083	384	0.200	Normal
Job Satisfaction	0.098	384	0.200	Normal
Social Support	0.086	384	0.200	Normal

Table 1 presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the three variables: personality traits, job satisfaction, and social support. This test was conducted to assess the normality of the data distribution. The findings indicate that for all three variables, the significance level is 0.200, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data distribution for these variables is normal. These results

allow researchers to use parametric tests for further analysis, as the assumption of normality is essential for these types of tests. The research findings are presented separately based on the conceptual model.

To test the first hypothesis, Pearson's correlation coefficient test was used. Table 2 presents the correlation between personality traits and job satisfaction.

 Table 2

 Correlation Between Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Personality Traits	Job Satisfaction	Coefficient of Determination	Degrees of Freedom	Significance Level
Personality Traits	1	0.826	0.682	382	0.000
Job Satisfaction	0.826	1			

Table 2 displays the correlation between personality traits and job satisfaction. The table includes the correlation coefficient, coefficient of determination, degrees of freedom, and significance level, examining the relationship between these two variables. The correlation coefficient between personality traits and job satisfaction is reported as 0.826, indicating a strong positive relationship between these two variables. Additionally, the coefficient of determination is 0.682, meaning that approximately 68% of job satisfaction variance is explained by personality traits.

The degrees of freedom for this analysis are 382, and the significance level is 0.000, which is less than 0.01, indicating a statistically significant relationship. These results suggest that personality traits are significantly associated with job satisfaction. In other words, individuals with more positive personality traits are likely to experience higher job satisfaction.

To test the second hypothesis, Pearson's correlation coefficient test was used. Table 3 presents the correlation between social support and job satisfaction.

Table 3

Correlation Between Social Support and Job Satisfaction

Variables	Social Support	Job Satisfaction	Coefficient of Determination	Degrees of Freedom	Significance Level
Social Support	1	0.874	0.763	382	0.000
Job Satisfaction	0.874	1			

Table 3 displays the correlation between social support and job satisfaction. This table includes the correlation coefficient, coefficient of determination, degrees of freedom, and significance level, assessing the relationship between these two variables. The correlation coefficient between social support and job satisfaction is reported as



0.874, indicating a strong positive relationship. Additionally, the coefficient of determination is 0.763, suggesting that approximately 76% of the variance in job satisfaction is explained by social support. The degrees of freedom for this analysis are 382, and the significance level is 0.000, which is less than 0.01, confirming a statistically significant relationship. These findings indicate that social support is significantly associated with job satisfaction. In

other words, individuals with higher levels of social support are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction.

Additionally, to test the third hypothesis, structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized. Before conducting SEM, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were performed as prerequisites. Table 4 presents the results of the KMO and Bartlett's tests.

Table 4

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test Results

Index	Value
Sample Adequacy (KMO Test)	0.951
Bartlett's Test (Chi-Square)	7870.942
Degrees of Freedom	91
Significance Level	0.000

Table 4 presents the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity. These tests assess the adequacy of sample size and the presence of significant correlations among variables before performing factor analysis. The KMO index in this study is reported as 0.951, indicating a high level of sample adequacy, as values close to 1 suggest that the data are suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's test was also conducted with a chi-square value of 7870.942 and degrees of freedom of 91. The significance level for this test is 0.000, which is less than 0.01, suggesting that the null hypothesis (which assumes variables are independent) is rejected. In other words, significant correlations exist among the variables, making

them suitable for factor analysis. These findings indicate that the collected data meet the necessary conditions for factor analysis and can be validly used in modeling and statistical analysis.

The results of structural equation modeling are presented in Table 5 and below figures. The data from this analysis indicate that the path coefficients between latent and observed variables exceed 0.30. Additionally, the results of the bootstrap test, with a t-statistic greater than 2.58, confirm the significance of the effects of latent variables on observed variables. These findings suggest that latent variables play a crucial role in determining the characteristics exhibited by observed variables in this study.

 Table 5

 Path Coefficients and Bootstrap Test Results for the Effects of Latent Variables on Observed Variables

Latent Variable	Observed Variable	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	Type of Effect	Path Coefficient Result	t-Statistic Result
Personality Traits	Neuroticism	0.897	61.380	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Extraversion	0.924	87.562	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Openness to Experience	0.909	24.156	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Agreeableness	0.951	40.671	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Conscientiousness	0.982	380.146	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
Social Support	Family Support	0.975	362.959	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Friends Support	0.964	360.590	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Significant Others	0.979	391.966	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
Job Satisfaction	Payment System	0.950	170.632	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Job Type	0.911	30.758	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Promotion Opportunities	0.960	235.478	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Organizational Climate	0.961	221.112	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Leadership Style	0.767	10.994	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)
	Physical Conditions	0.949	177.152	Direct	Confirmed (≥0.30)	Confirmed (≥2.58)

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Figure 1

Composite Reliability and Path Coefficients of the Relationship Between Personality Traits and Job Satisfaction with the Mediating Role of Social Support

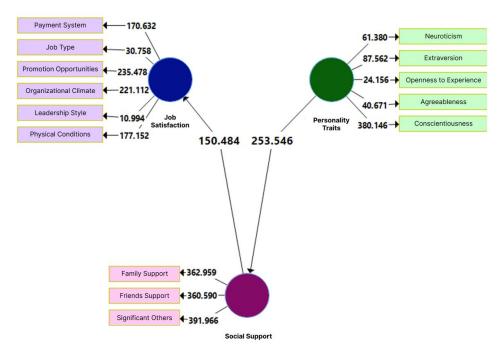


Figure 2

Model with Factor Loadings

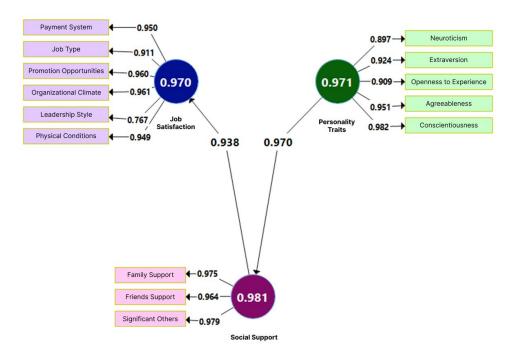


Table 6 presents the path coefficients and bootstrap test results for the direct and indirect effects between variables.

This analysis examines the influence of personality traits on social support and job satisfaction.



 Table 6

 Path Coefficients and Bootstrap Test Results for Direct and Indirect Effects Between Variables

Path Relationship	Type of Effect	Path Coefficient	t-Statistic	P-Value
Personality Traits → Social Support	Direct	0.970	253.546	0.000
Personality Traits → Job Satisfaction (via Social Support)	Indirect	0.938	150.484	0.000

First, the direct effect of personality traits on social support was assessed. The path coefficient of 0.970 indicates a strong positive effect of personality traits on social support. Additionally, the t-statistic of 253.546 and a P-value of 0.000 confirm that this effect is statistically significant. In other words, personality traits have a substantial impact on social support.

Next, the indirect effect of personality traits on job satisfaction through social support was analyzed. The path coefficient of 0.938 indicates a strong positive effect of social support on job satisfaction. Moreover, the t-statistic of 150.484 and a P-value of 0.000 confirm the statistical significance of this effect.

These findings suggest that social support plays a mediating role in the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction. Overall, the analyses indicate that personality traits not only directly influence social support but also have an indirect impact on job satisfaction through the mediation of social support.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to model the structural equation relationships between personality traits and job satisfaction, with the mediating role of social support among the educational-therapeutic staff of teaching hospitals in Tabriz during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results indicated significant relationships between personality traits and job satisfaction, as well as between social support and job satisfaction. Furthermore, social support played a mediating role in the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction.

The findings regarding the association between personality traits and job satisfaction align with prior studies (Li et al., 2025; Ok et al., 2023; Weerasekara & Perera, 2024). Personality traits can influence mental health outcomes (Li et al., 2025), with neuroticism acting as a vulnerability factor and extraversion and conscientiousness serving as protective factors (Ok et al., 2023; Weerasekara & Perera, 2024). Openness to experience is positively related to problem-focused coping and negatively associated with

emotion-focused coping, consistent with previous findings highlighting the importance of openness for adaptive coping (Dehghan Harati et al., 2024; Li et al., 2025; Mi et al., 2025; Ok et al., 2023; Weerasekara & Perera, 2024; Zarrin Kolak et al., 2023). Thus, individuals scoring high on openness to experience tend to be more flexible and creative than others. Additionally, these individuals experience emotions more comfortably, as they are better able to accept both their own emotions and those of others. This suggests that such individuals can flexibly employ various coping strategies to minimize the negative effects of stressors and distress (Ok et al., 2023; Zarrin Kolak et al., 2023). Therefore, they are more likely to engage in problem-focused coping rather than emotion-focused coping (Uye et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2023). Consequently, individuals with positive personality traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness tend to have higher job satisfaction. On the other hand, those scoring high in neuroticism typically experience lower job satisfaction.

Recognizing personality traits in the workplace can contribute to increased job satisfaction and emphasizes the importance of person-job fit. Personality traits such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness can influence behavior and social interactions. Extraverted individuals tend to establish better social relationships and receive more social support, which can enhance job satisfaction. Moreover, personality traits affect how individuals cope with occupational stress. For example, those high in openness to experience are more inclined to use problem-focused coping strategies, which can reduce negative emotions and improve job satisfaction. Additionally, neuroticism can act as a vulnerability factor, affecting mental health, while traits such as extraversion and conscientiousness can enhance overall satisfaction. The alignment between an individual's personality and job type also plays a crucial role in determining job satisfaction levels; the greater the compatibility, the higher the job satisfaction. Ultimately, considering personality traits in the workplace can lead to substantial improvements in employees' job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the findings regarding the relationship between social support and job satisfaction are consistent with prior findings (Rahgoi, 2024; Zarrin Kolak et al., 2023). Higher levels of social support help individuals develop better self-esteem, increase their perceived ability to cope with stress, and enhance their problem-solving skills while minimizing the intensity of stressors. Most researchers agree that social support can serve as a valuable coping resource (Rahgoi, 2024; Zarrin Kolak et al., 2023). Therefore, social support helps individuals feel valued and connected while receiving positive feedback. Positive social interactions stemming from social support can boost self-esteem and improve overall quality of life. Social support not only reduces stress but also shapes how individuals experience challenges. Those with high levels of social support tend to cope more effectively with workplace pressures, leading to greater job satisfaction.

Social support enhances self-esteem and reinforces a sense of self-worth, which, in turn, increases job satisfaction. It also improves individuals' ability to manage stress and solve problems while reducing the intensity of stressors. Additionally, social support serves as a valuable coping resource that helps individuals navigate workplace challenges. Thus, establishing and maintaining support networks in the workplace can significantly enhance employees' job satisfaction.

Moreover, the findings regarding the mediating role of social support in the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction are consistent with prior findings (Asl et al., 2022; Asl et al., 2021; Keramati, 2021) A lack of social support may increase feelings of hopelessness due to perceived absence of support, unsuccessful support efforts that fail to meet recipients' needs, or negative interactions with support providers, such as criticism or avoidance. If an individual perceives a lack of support from significant others or is dissatisfied with the support received, they may resort to maladaptive or counterproductive coping strategies, leading to negative consequences for well-being and satisfaction (Asl et al., 2022).

Overall, the mediating role of social support suggests that it enhances individuals' perceptions of themselves and their activities. It fosters confidence, hopeful thoughts, mental health, and overall quality of life, helping individuals remain focused and precise in their work (Zarrin Kolak et al., 2023). Additionally, access to social support can act as a buffer against increasing stress levels. Educational-therapeutic staff with higher levels of social support tend to perceive work-related stressors as less overwhelming, which helps maintain their job performance, motivation, and positive

attitude toward their profession while increasing their compassion and commitment to patients (Rahgoi, 2024).

The primary limitation of this study was its timing during the COVID-19 pandemic. First, pandemic conditions restricted access to hospitals and medical clinics. Second, due to the high workload of educational-therapeutic staff, completing the questionnaire required considerable time, as the overwhelming number of COVID-19 patients and shortage of healthcare workers complicated the research process.

Despite these limitations, the study offers several recommendations at different levels. At the macro level, governments should increase investment in healthcare systems to reduce occupational anxiety and stress among educational-therapeutic staff, who face heavier workloads than their counterparts in many other countries. Therefore, governments must expand medical colleges and public hospitals nationwide to improve the physician-to-patient ratio. Additionally, governments should allocate more resources to equip community healthcare services more effectively. The challenges faced by community healthcare services include inadequate facilities and insufficient funding to hire skilled and experienced healthcare professionals. Thus, it is essential for governments to increase financial support for community health facilities.

Beyond organizational changes, intervention programs should be implemented to provide behavioral-cognitive training, psychotherapy, counseling, adaptive skill training, communication skills training, and social support programs to help individuals manage occupational stress and anxiety. These interventions could have significant implications for job satisfaction.

Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards including obtaining informed consent, ensuring privacy and confidentiality were observed.

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