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OPEN PEER REVIEW

Investigating Stress and Anxiety Among Bank Melli Iran Employees During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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About this report

This open peer review (OPR) report shows the public comments made on this article during peer review, by the reviewers, the associate editor and the editor-in-chief, for every revision round, together with the authors' replies. Comments appear only with the consent of the people who wrote them. Reviewers who chose to sign their report are named; the others are shown as "Referee". Comments are edited for language only, and confidential remarks to the editors are not included.

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Contents

1 **Original submission** Referee 1, Referee 2, Associate Editor 2
2 **Revision 1** Maryam Changizi 4
Authors' reply to reviewers 5
Reviewer and editor comments 8
3 **Revision 2** Maryam Changizi, Associate Editor, Editor-in-Chief 9
Authors' reply to reviewers 10
Reviewer and editor comments 11
4 **Revision 3** Editor-in-Chief 14
Authors' reply to reviewers 15
Reviewer and editor comments 17

1 Original submission

3 comments · 16 Mar 2024 – 16 May 2024

Referee 1 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 16 Mar 2024

dear author please:

Review and summarize the abstract section.
Revise the introduction for coherence and integration.
Considering the huge difference between the population of nurses in Torbat Heydarieh Hospital and that of employees of Melli Bank branches in Abadan and Khorramshahr, the cited article cannot be a suitable reference for choosing the same sample size.
Explain the systematic random sampling method in detail.
Clearly explain the participant selection process.
Provide a complete explanation of the data collection process.
Clarify the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study.
Psychiatric illness history is a variable that can affect the results. Explain why it was not included as an exclusion criterion and was not controlled as a confounding variable.
Ethical considerations should be removed from the method section.
Remove Table 1 – DASS 21 Severity Ratings and incorporate essential details into the method section.
Include the results of the correlation analysis between the variables of the demographic questionnaire and the depression, anxiety, and stress questionnaire.
Align the tables of revisions and main study results.
The articles used in the discussion section are not relevant.
The results of the article should be reviewed according to the research objectives.
Add sections for conclusion, Ethical considerations, limitations, recommendations, acknowledgment, funding, and conflict of interest.
Reformat references using Vancouver style.

Referee 2 Reviewer

MAJOR REVISION 16 Apr 2024

The title of the article is long. Make it short and expressive.
The abstract should be shortened a little. It contains more than 250 words.
Include the conclusion in the abstract.
The introduction needs to be strengthened and lacks sufficient coherence. The results of similar investigations regarding the prevalence of anxiety related to corona disease have not been reported.
The order of reporting the results is inappropriate. First, discuss the demographic variables, then mention the main research variables.
In general, the discussion is incomplete and poorly written and needs to be strengthened.
The article's conclusions, ethical approval, conflict of interest, and funding sources have not been provided.
Some references are old. Use up-to-date sources from the last 5 years.
Some references are old. Use up-to-date sources from the last 5 years.

Associate Editor MINOR REVISION 16 May 2024

minor revision

2

Revision 1

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Reviewer 1:

Question:

dear author please:

Review and summarize the abstract section.

Revise the introduction for coherence and integration.

Considering the huge difference in the population of nurses in Torbat Heydarieh

Hospital and the employees of Melli Bank branches in Abadan and Khorramshahr, the mentioned article cannot be a suitable reference for choosing the same sample number.

Explain the systematic random sampling method in detail.

Clearly explain the participant’s selection process.

Provide a complete explanation of the data collection process.

Clarify the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the study.

Psychiatric illness history is a variable that can affect the results. Explain why it was not included as an exclusion criterion and not controlled as a confounding variable.

Ethical considerations should be removed from the method section.

Remove Table 1 – DASS 21 Severity Ratings and incorporate essential details into the method section.

Include the results of the correlation analysis between the variables of demographic questionnaire, depression, anxiety, and stress questionnaire should be mentioned.

Align the tables of revisions, and main study results.

The articles used in the discussion section are not relevant.

The results of the article should be reviewed according to the research objectives.

Add sections for conclusion, Ethical considerations, limitations, recommendations, acknowledgment, funding, and conflict of interest.

Reformat references using Vancouver style

Reply: Thanks to the respected reviewer, all requested edits were edited and imported and uploaded in the main file:

The summary section was edited.

The introduction was edited.

The article that was used to determine the sample size was changed and the closest article was used. The sampling method was a census, which was translated incorrectly and corrected and explained in detail.

The method of selecting the samples was explained.

The data collection steps were explained in detail.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were added.

Mental illnesses and a history of taking psychiatric medications were among our exclusion criteria, which were added to this section.

The code of ethics was removed from the method section.

Table 1 was removed.

In the results section, the relationship between demographic variables and anxiety and stress was identified.

The tables were edited and arranged.

The discussion section was changed.

The results section was changed.

Recommendations, acknowledgements, etc. were added at the end of the article.

References were edited and done in accordance with the Vancouver method.

Reviewer 2:

Question:

1. The introduction should be shortened a little. It has been written in more than 250 words.
2. Why did you use the Paired T test? What are the related results?
3. State the results in the introduction as percentages.
4. The introduction needs strengthening and does not have sufficient coherence. The results of similar studies on the prevalence of worry related to the coronavirus disease have not been reported.
5. The order of reporting the results is inappropriate. First discuss the demographic variables, then mention the main research variables.
6. Write a better title for the table. It is very short and inadequate.
7. Frequencies in the tables should be reported together with percentages.

8. Overall, the discussion is incomplete and poorly written and needs strengthening.
9. Write the conclusion of the article.
10. All items of Ethical approval- Conflict OR interest - Funding should be mentioned.
11. Referencing should be edited in the Vancouver style.

Reply:

With thanks for the efforts of the respected reviewer, the following items were done, and entered and highlighted in the main file:

1. The introduction was changed and made more concise.
2. The Paired T test had been mentioned in the introduction by mistake, and it was removed.
3. The results in the introduction were stated as percentages.
4. The introduction was changed slightly.
5. A demographic table was added.
6. The titles of the tables were edited.
7. Frequencies in the tables were reported together with percentages.
8. The discussion was edited.
9. The conclusion was added.
10. All items of Ethical approval- Conflict OR interest - Funding were added.
11. Referencing was edited in the Vancouver style.

2 Revision 1

1 comment · 12 Apr 2025

Maryam Changizi Reviewer

MINOR REVISION 12 Apr 2025

The manuscript has improved somewhat. However, the results section needs to be revised. It is not elegant to repeat the results simultaneously in both the table and the text. It would be better to start the results section with a brief explanation of the demographic variables. The discussion section also needs more evidence. It is suggested that the final recommendations be integrated into the discussion or conclusion.

3

Revision 2

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Reviewer 1:

Question:

The manuscript has improved somewhat. However, the results section needs to be revised. It is not elegant to repeat the results simultaneously in both the table and the text. It would be better to start the results section with a brief explanation of the demographic variables. The discussion section also needs more evidence. It is suggested that the final recommendations be integrated into the discussion or conclusion.

Reply:

The Results section has been revised.

Two additional studies were added to the Discussion.

The final recommendations were integrated into the discussion.

3 Revision 2

3 comments · 17 Jul 2025 – 30 Jul 2025

Maryam Changizi Reviewer

MINOR REVISION 17 Jul 2025

The manuscript has improved, but the following items need revision:
- The title of the study does not match the purpose. It is better to revise the title: Investigating anxiety and worry in bank employees...
- In the results section, lines 98 to 100 should be placed before Table 1.
- In Table 1, it would be better to remove the locations of Abadan and Khorramshahr from the table title.
- Place the paragraph related to lines 101 to 103 before Table 2.
- Place the paragraph related to lines 110 to 114 in the Methods and Tools section.
- Recommendations should be written in general terms, and there is no need for a title or details at the end of the discussion.
- The acknowledgment section is also best included in one paragraph.

Associate Editor

MINOR REVISION 28 Jul 2025

Dear Authors,
Thank you for submitting your revised manuscript, “Mental Health Challenges among Bank Melli Iran employees during the Covid-19 pandemic”, to Comprehensive Health and Biomedical Studies. I have carefully evaluated your work alongside our reviewers, and we agree that your study makes a valuable contribution to the field. However, some minor revisions are required to strengthen the manuscript before formal acceptance.
Please address all comments in the attached review reports and submit your revised manuscript. Changes should be highlighted, and a point-by-point response to the reviewers’ and my comments must accompany your resubmission.
Assuming the revisions align with the feedback, no further review will be needed, and the manuscript will proceed to acceptance. We appreciate your attention to these refinements and look forward to your prompt response.

AE Assessment:
This revised manuscript investigates the mental health impact of COVID-19 on Bank Melli Iran employees, focusing on stress and anxiety. The study’s strengths include its timely relevance, use of validated tools (DASS-21), and census sampling.

Detailed Review
Comment 1 (Abstract): The abstract claims "98.1% severe/very severe anxiety," but Table 3 sums to 108/110 (98.18%). Round to one decimal place for consistency.

Comment 2 (Methods): Clarify why DASS-21 scores were multiplied by 2. Cite validation studies explicitly (Moradi Panah 2013, Kavousi 2015) to justify this adjustment.

Comment 3 (Discussion): The comparison to healthcare workers (Line 135-139) is speculative. Add references to occupational stress literature to support the claim that bank employees lack crisis training.

Final Decision: Major Revision

Kind Regard | Publisher Supervisor

Editor-in-Chief

MINOR REVISION 30 Jul 2025

Public Comment:
Dear Authors,
Thank you for submitting your revised manuscript, “Mental Health Challenges among Bank Melli Iran employees during the Covid-19 pandemic” (MS ID: 142902), to Comprehensive Health and Biomedical Studies. I have carefully evaluated your work alongside our reviewers, and we agree that your study makes a valuable contribution to the field. However, some minor revisions are required to strengthen the manuscript before formal acceptance.
Please address all comments in the attached review reports and submit your revised manuscript. Changes should be highlighted, and a point-by-point response to the reviewers’ and my comments must accompany your resubmission.
Assuming the revisions align with the feedback, no further review will be needed, and the manuscript will proceed to acceptance. We appreciate your attention to these refinements and look forward to your prompt response.

AE Assessment:
This revised manuscript investigates the mental health impact of COVID-19 on Bank Melli Iran employees, focusing on stress and anxiety. The study’s strengths include its timely relevance, use of validated tools (DASS-21), and census sampling.
Detailed Review
Comment 1 (Abstract): The abstract claims "98.1% severe/very severe anxiety," but Table 3 sums to 108/110 (98.18%). Round to one decimal place for consistency.
Comment 2 (Methods): Clarify why DASS-21 scores were multiplied by 2. Cite validation studies explicitly (Moradi Panah 2013, Kavousi 2015) to justify this adjustment.
Comment 3 (Discussion): The comparison to healthcare workers (Line 135-139) is speculative. Add references to occupational stress literature to support the claim that bank employees lack crisis training.
Final Decision: Major Revision
Kind Regard | Publisher Supervisor

Decision:
Minor revision
Public Comment:
The manuscript has improved, but the following items need revision:
- The title of the study does not match the purpose. It is better to revise the title: Investigating anxiety and worry in bank employees.....
- In the results section, lines 98 to 100 should be placed before Table 1.
- In Table 1, it would be better to remove the locations of Abadan and Khorramshahr from the table title.
- Place the paragraph related to lines 101 to 103 before Table 2.
- Place the paragraph related to lines 110 to 114 in the Methods and Tools section.
- Recommendations should be written in general terms, and there is no need for a title or details at the end of the discussion.
- The acknowledgment section is also best included in one paragraph.

Decision:
Minor revision

4

Revision 3

AUTHORS' RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS

Authors' reply to reviewers

The next pages contain the authors' point-by-point reply to the comments of this revision round, as submitted with the revised manuscript. It is published as the authors wrote it.

Reviewers' Comments:

Reviewer 0:

The manuscript has improved, but the following items need revision:

1. The title of the study does not match the purpose. It is better to revise the title: Investigating anxiety and worry in bank employees.....

2. In the results section, lines 98 to 100 should be placed before Table 1.

3. In Table 1, it would be better to remove the locations of Abadan and Khorramshahr from the table title.

4. Place the paragraph related to lines 101 to 103 before Table 2.

5. Place the paragraph related to lines 110 to 114 in the Methods and Tools section.

6. Recommendations should be written in general terms and there is no need for a title or details at the end of the discussion.

7. The acknowledgement section is also best included in one paragraph.

Reply:

Thank you for your thorough review and valuable comments on the abstract of our manuscript. Your feedback is greatly appreciated and has helped us improve its clarity and comprehensiveness.

1. **Page 1, Line 1:** The title was changed from "Investigating stress and anxiety among..." to "**Investigating anxiety and stress among Bank Melli Iran employees during the Covid-19 pandemic**".
2. **Page 4, Lines 1-4:** The descriptive paragraph beginning with "The sample comprised mostly male..." was moved from after Table 1 to a position **before Table 1**.
3. **Page 4, Table 1 Title:** The table title was changed from "Demographic characteristics of Bank Melli Iran employees in Abadan and Khorramshahr" to "**Demographic characteristics of participants**".
4. **Page 5, Lines 1-3:** The paragraph with the mean scores ("According to the results of Table N. 2...") was moved from after Table 2 to a position **before Table 2**.
5. **Page 3, Lines 22-25:** The technical note regarding DASS-21 score calculation ("Because this questionnaire was containing 42 questions...") was relocated from the Results section to the **Methods section**, within the description of the DASS-21 questionnaire.
6. **Page 7, Lines 18-20:** The specific bulleted list of recommendations was removed and replaced with a general concluding sentence in the **Discussion**: "Therefore, it is essential for health authorities and bank management to implement organizational mental health support programs and develop strategies to mitigate workplace stress during public health crises."

7. **Page 9, "Acknowledgment":** The acknowledgment section was reformatted from separate lines into a **single, continuous paragraph**.

Associate Editor 0:

Comment 1 (Abstract): The abstract claims "98.1% severe/very severe anxiety," but Table 3 sums to 108/110 (98.18%). Round to one decimal place for consistency.

Comment 2 (Methods): Clarify why DASS-21 scores were multiplied by 2. Cite validation studies explicitly (Moradi Panah 2013, Kavousi 2015) to justify this adjustment.

Comment 3 (Discussion): The comparison to healthcare workers (Line 135-139) is speculative. Add references to occupational stress literature to support the claim that bank employees lack crisis training.

Final Decision: Major Revision

Reply:

1. **Page 1, Line 9:** "98.1%" changed to "**98.2%**".
2. **Page 3, Lines 22-28:** The explanation for score multiplication was revised and now cites a **new reference [12]** for the Persian validation study, as requested.
3. **Page 7, Lines 18-22:** The comparison regarding crisis training was supported by adding a citation to the occupational stress literature (**new Ref 20**).

We believe these revisions significantly strengthen the abstract and thank you again for your constructive guidance.

Sincerely,

4 Revision 3

1 comment · 18 Nov 2025

Editor-in-Chief

ACCEPT 18 Nov 2025

accept