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Validation of the Ethical Policy Model of Human Resource Managers in Employee Separation and Placement Universities of Medical Sciences in the Western Region of the Country

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ABSTRACT

Objective: One of the important issues in organizations is human resource management and ethical considerations. Therefore, the aim of this study was to validate the model of ethical policies of human resource managers in the processes of employee separation and placement in universities of medical sciences in the western region of the country.

Methods: This research was applied in terms of purpose and descriptive–survey in terms of method. The statistical population included all experts working in universities of medical sciences in the western region of the country, totaling 38,780 individuals. The sample size was 384 participants, selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire. To assess discriminant validity, the Fornell–Larcker criterion and cross-loadings were used. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, with values above 0.7. Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software.

Results: Based on the research results, an ethics-oriented approach to human resource management is observed at a desirable level in the studied universities. In addition, the results of testing the research model showed that all five dimensions identified in the qualitative phase—empowerment, selection and recruitment, motivation and communication, compensation, and performance management—have a positive and significant effect on the ethical policies of human resource managers.

Conclusions: The findings indicate that adherence to an ethics-oriented approach in human resource management at the universities of medical sciences in the western region of the country is at a satisfactory level, and all main dimensions of human resource management have a positive and significant impact on the ethical policies of managers.

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Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) refers to a set of policies, processes, and systems aimed at attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining the workforce within an organization. This field of management not only focuses on productivity and operational efficiency but also emphasizes employee well-being, organizational justice, and the alignment of individual goals with broader organizational objectives. In today's world, where technological change and labor market transformations are accelerating, the role of HRM has evolved from a support function into a strategic partner (Armstrong & Taylor, 2024).

In recent years, HRM has been influenced by trends such as digitalization, remote work, generational diversity, and increased attention to sustainability. The use of artificial intelligence in résumé screening, employee data analytics, and automated performance management systems represents prominent examples of these transformations. Moreover, the concept of employee experience has emerged as a key factor in attracting and retaining talent, encouraging organizations to design flexible, inclusive, and trust-based work environments (CIPD, 2024).

Today's human resource managers face multiple challenges, including balancing the flexibility of remote work with the preservation of organizational culture, managing the expectations of different generations of employees (from Baby Boomers to Generation Z), and responding to growing pressures for transparency and social accountability. In addition, global crises—such as pandemics or geopolitical developments—have further highlighted the need for resilient and agile human resource planning (Ulrich & Brockbank, 2024).

The future of HRM is moving toward greater personalization of solutions, deeper integration of advanced technologies (such as virtual reality in training and development), and a strengthened role for HR in organizational transformation. Furthermore, the emphasis on non-financial indicators (such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and diversity) in evaluating HR performance is expected to increase. Ultimately, human resource managers must be able to maintain operational efficiency while acting as advocates for employee rights and facilitators of organizational change (SHRM, 2024).

Human Resource Management plays a critical role in employee separation processes, as employee separation is not merely an administrative or economic decision but entails significant psychological, social, and ethical consequences for both individuals and organizations. HR is

responsible for designing and implementing processes that ensure separations are carried out based on transparent, fair, and defensible criteria. Research indicates that the way separations are managed can directly influence the trust of remaining employees, the organization's employer brand, and even its long-term performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2024; SHRM, 2024).

In recent years, contemporary HRM approaches have placed increasing emphasis on employee redeployment as an ethical and strategic alternative to layoffs. Redeployment involves identifying employees' transferable skills, reskilling them, and transferring them to other jobs or units within the organization. This approach not only preserves human capital but also reduces the economic and social costs of termination and leads to higher levels of employee commitment and loyalty (McKinsey & Company, 2024).

From an ethical perspective, separation and redeployment management should be grounded in principles such as organizational justice, respect for human dignity, decision-making transparency, and post-separation support. Studies conducted in Iran have shown that neglecting these principles leads to perceptions of injustice, organizational burnout, and a decline in social capital. Conversely, organizations that implement separations with transparent communication, opportunities for appeal, and supportive programs are able to maintain professional and positive relationships with former employees even after separation (Hosseini et al., 2024).

In the data-driven era, HR can use predictive analytics to identify separation risks at an earlier stage and, instead of reactive decisions, design redeployment and skill development solutions. This approach creates a meaningful link between organizational efficiency and ethical responsibility and elevates HRM from an operational role to a strategic and ethics-oriented function (AIHR, 2025).

Generally, employee separation occurs when an employee ends their membership in an organization. Well-managed organizations strive to monitor employee turnover rates and identify and manage the reasons for turnover, with the aim of reducing job exits and their associated costs. Turnover costs can be particularly high for highly specialized positions. A turnover rate that is significantly higher than standard levels often indicate underlying organizational problems. Employee separations are generally categorized into two types: voluntary separations, initiated by employees themselves, and involuntary separations, initiated by the organization. Voluntary separation occurs when an employee decides to end their relationship with the organization for

personal or professional reasons, such as finding a better job, allocating more time to family and leisure, and similar factors (Taghvaei et al., 2017; Gao et al., 2018; Afshar et al., 2018).

Regarding voluntary employee separation, there are both supportive and opposing viewpoints. Proponents argue that voluntary turnover can benefit organizations by allowing the departure of low-performing employees and their replacement with new, motivated personnel. In contrast, opponents contend that voluntary turnover imposes substantial costs on organizations, including recruitment and training expenses for new employees. Involuntary separation occurs when management decides to terminate the employment relationship due to reasons such as economic necessity, poor person–organization fit, disciplinary issues, and similar factors (Taghvaei et al., 2017).

Overall, both voluntary and involuntary employee separations entail consequences and implications that place organizational managers in a serious dilemma. On the one hand, managers may be inclined toward workforce reduction to lower costs, gain competitive advantage, increase market share, or enhance effectiveness and efficiency. On the other hand, they are also aware of the negative effects of separation. The need for appropriate measures regarding job classification, performance management, and the morale of employees who remain after separation programs indicates that managers must implement separation processes through careful and time-bound planning. Such an approach enables organizations to take advantage of opportunities arising from separation while minimizing its future challenges and risks (Rahman & Naeem, 2011).

Khandan and Mohammadi (2025) concluded that job-related factors such as the number of job transfers, organizational position, years of service, and working hours have the greatest impact on turnover, and that turnover is more prevalent among individuals under the age of 30. They also found that machine learning models demonstrated high accuracy in predicting employee turnover. Chitsazian et al. (2024) found that antecedents of employee turnover can be classified into three categories—individual, job-related, and organizational factors—which directly or indirectly influence employee turnover. Suryan and Siamsbuhari (2024) reported that human resource development programs, transformational leadership, and compensation policies have a positive and significant effect on employee retention in the Perhutani Jakarta Company, and that the proposed model demonstrated satisfactory goodness of fit. Rahmani and Prayoga (2023) found

that a supportive work environment positively affects employee retention through the mediating role of organizational engagement.

Regarding the necessity of the present study, it can be stated that the more knowledge is gained about employee separation and redeployment, the greater the preparedness will be. Therefore, determining by whom, how, when, and where employee separation and redeployment should occur is of critical importance, as it enables optimal utilization of existing human resources in the future, influences individual capabilities, and contributes to the improvement of skills and competencies related to employees' future careers and performance. In this context, taking necessary measures concerning the future job status and social dignity of employees who leave the organization is also essential and must be considered by policymakers and decision-makers. In light of the above discussion, the objective of this study is to validate a model of ethical policy frameworks for human resource managers in employee separation and redeployment.

Material and Methods

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive–survey in terms of methodology, and it was conducted using a fully quantitative approach. The statistical population of the study consisted of all experts employed in medical sciences universities in the western region of the country, totaling 38,780 individuals. Based on the Morgan and Krejcie table, the required sample size was estimated at 384 respondents. Simple random sampling was employed to ensure the generalizability of the findings to the target population.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire, designed according to the constructs and indicators of the proposed research model. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale. The content validity of the questionnaire was assessed using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) and the Content Validity Index (CVI). CVR was calculated based on Lawshe's model, and items with values below the minimum acceptable threshold were removed. In addition, items with a CVI value below 0.79 were excluded from the final questionnaire.

Construct validity was evaluated through convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values greater than 0.50 considered acceptable. Discriminant validity was examined using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and cross-loadings.

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and factor loadings. Values greater than 0.70 for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, and greater than 0.40 for factor loadings, were considered acceptable. Finally, data analysis and testing of the research model were conducted using SmartPLS software. Path coefficients and the statistical significance of the relationships between constructs were examined to evaluate the proposed model.

Results

The statistical population of this study consisted of 384 employees, who were relatively balanced in terms of gender. Most respondents were in the middle age range (31–50 years), held advanced academic degrees (master's level and above), and had considerable work experience (11–20 years). In what follows, descriptive statistics related to the dimensions of the variable Ethical Policies of Human Resource Managers are presented.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Dimensions of Ethical Policies of Human Resource Managers

Dimension	Mean	Percentage	Standard Deviation	Variance
Motivation and Communication	3.7	74	0.837	0.702
Selection and Recruitment	3.7	74	0.814	0.663
Empowerment	3.8	76	0.808	0.654
Compensation	3.2	64	0.671	0.451
Performance Management	1.9	38	0.633	0.402

The results indicate that among the dimensions of ethical policies of human resource managers, empowerment, with a mean score of 3.8, has the highest value, reflecting greater managerial attention to employee growth and development. This is followed by motivation and communication and selection and recruitment, both with a mean of 3.7. In contrast, performance management, with a mean of 1.9, shows the lowest value, suggesting a relative weakness in ethical performance evaluation and feedback processes. Overall, the findings suggest that managers place greater emphasis on developmental and human-centered aspects of HRM rather than on control-oriented performance assessment.

The results related to homogeneity validity (factor loadings), convergent validity, and reliability of the measurement model are presented in Tables 2 to 4, respectively.

Table 2. Assessment of Indicator Reliability (Factor Loadings / Homogeneity Validity)

Item	Factor Loading	Item	Factor Loading	Item	Factor Loading
Q1	0.901	Q34	0.858	Q67	0.911
Q2	0.875	Q35	0.738	Q68	0.546
Q3	0.737	Q36	0.598	Q69	0.749
Q4	0.859	Q37	0.631	Q70	0.397
Q5	0.782	Q38	0.638	Q71	0.820
Q6	0.875	Q39	0.572	Q72	0.747
Q7	0.912	Q40	0.430	Q73	0.811
Q8	0.796	Q41	0.902	Q74	0.740
Q9	0.770	Q42	0.891	Q75	0.808
Q10	0.900	Q43	0.791	Q76	0.738
Q11	0.897	Q44	0.774	Q77	0.397
Q12	0.689	Q45	0.800	Q78	0.574
Q13	0.828	Q46	0.790	Q79	0.596
Q14	0.777	Q47	0.887	Q80	0.630
Q15	0.794	Q48	0.726	Q81	0.822
Q16	0.796	Q49	0.864	Q82	0.767
Q17	0.595	Q50	0.851	Q83	0.756
Q18	0.786	Q51	0.868	Q84	0.796
Q19	0.815	Q52	0.824	Q85	0.313
Q20	0.857	Q53	0.828	Q86	0.860
Q21	0.834	Q54	0.834	Q87	0.661
Q22	0.450	Q55	0.859	Q88	0.729
Q23	0.848	Q56	0.851	Q89	0.698
Q24	0.791	Q57	0.856	Q90	0.773
Q25	0.812	Q58	0.829	Q91	0.698
Q26	0.472	Q59	0.841	Q92	0.426
Q27	0.914	Q60	0.475	Q93	0.792
Q28	0.884	Q61	0.683	Q94	0.702
Q29	0.751	Q62	0.810	Q95	0.325
Q30	0.831	Q63	0.680	Q96	0.734
Q31	0.434	Q64	0.721	Q97	0.773
Q32	0.875	Q65	0.757	Q98	0.771
Q33	0.892	Q66	0.932		

The results show that each item loads on its respective construct with a specific factor loading, indicating the extent to which each item measures the intended variable. Items with factor loadings greater than 0.30 were considered acceptable and therefore retained in the measurement (outer) model, confirming their adequacy for measuring the constructs.

Table 3. Assessment of Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)

Variables	Selection & Recruitment	Motivation & Communication	Empowerment	Compensation	Ethical HR Policies	Performance Management
Selection & Recruitment	0.842					
Motivation & Communication	0.747	0.819				
Empowerment	0.761	0.744	0.846			
Compensation	0.858	0.840	0.783	0.871		
Ethical HR Policies	0.771	0.755	0.772	0.709	0.889	
Performance Management	0.516	0.487	0.482	0.558	0.646	0.838

The highlighted diagonal values represent the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Since all diagonal values are greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlations, the results confirm adequate discriminant validity, indicating that each construct is empirically distinct and that multicollinearity among constructs is not a concern.

Table 4. Reliability Assessment of the Measurement Model

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Spearman Coefficient
Selection and Recruitment	0.965	0.969	0.969
Motivation and Communication	0.951	0.959	0.964
Empowerment	0.980	0.981	0.982
Compensation	0.846	0.876	0.897
Ethical HR Policies	0.975	0.976	0.990
Performance Management	0.935	0.878	0.982

As shown in Table 4, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all constructs exceed 0.70, indicating high internal consistency among questionnaire items outside the measurement model. Therefore, the instrument demonstrates acceptable and robust reliability. At the final stage, based on the diagrams presenting path coefficient estimates and their significance levels, the structural model is illustrated schematically. It should be noted that in the first diagram (path coefficient estimation), the values displayed on the arrows represent the beta (path) coefficients of the first step of the structural model, indicating the magnitude of effects among variables. Additionally, the value shown inside each circle (latent variable) represents the proportion of variance explained (R^2) by the constructs that have incoming paths to that variable.

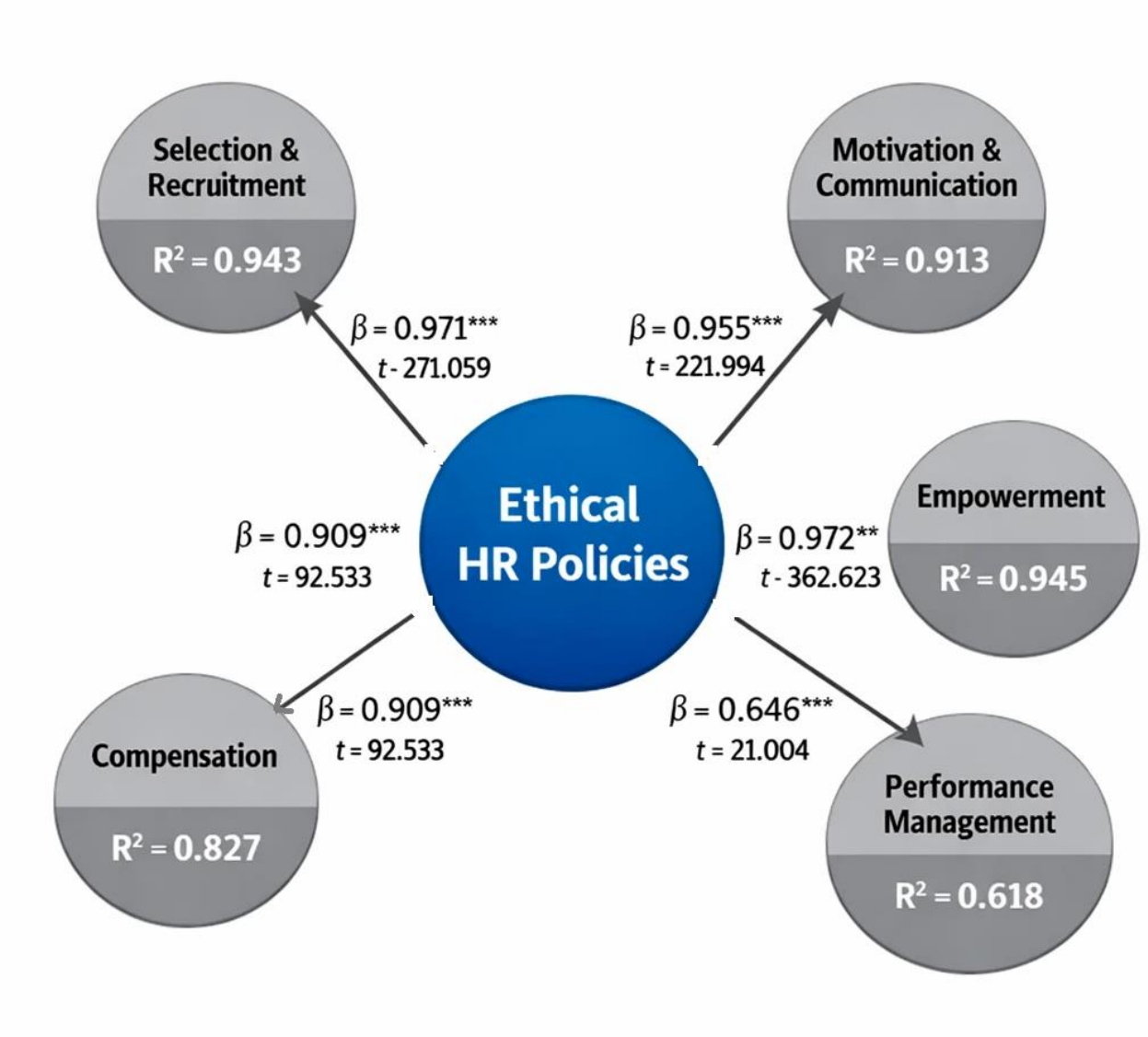

Figure 1. Measurement Model of Ethical HR Policies for Employee Separation and Redeployment at Medical Sciences Universities

Table 5. Path Coefficient Results

Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	Standard Deviation	t-value	Significance Level	Result
Ethical HR Policies → Selection & Recruitment	0.971	0.004	271.059	0.001	Significant
Ethical HR Policies → Motivation & Communication	0.955	0.004	221.994	0.001	Significant
Ethical HR Policies → Empowerment	0.972	0.003	362.623	0.001	Significant
Ethical HR Policies → Compensation	0.909	0.010	92.533	0.001	Significant
Ethical HR Policies → Performance Management	0.646	0.031	21.004	0.001	Significant

The t-value (structural equation test statistic) for all relationships lies outside the range of ±2.58, meaning that all paths are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. Path coefficients (β) further indicate that the dimension Empowerment has the strongest effect (β=0.972), followed by Selection & Recruitment (β=0.971) and Motivation & Communication (β=0.955). Compensation (β=0.909) and Performance Management (β=0.646) also have positive and significant effects, albeit of lower magnitude. Therefore, all paths are significant, and all dimensions contribute effectively to explaining and enhancing the model of Ethical HR Policies, with Empowerment and Selection & Recruitment being the strongest contributors.

Table 6. Predictive Quality Indices of the Dimensions of Ethical HR Policies (Research Sub-question 3)

Quality Index	Level/Value	Motivation & Communication	Selection & Recruitment	Empowerment	Compensation	Performance Management
R^2 (Coefficient)	Value	0.913	0.943	0.945	0.827	0.618
	Category	Very Strong (≥0.67)	★	★	★	★
SRMR (Test Value)	0.186					
GOF (Test Value)	0.777					
	Category	Very Strong (GOF ≥ 0.36)	★			
Q^2 (Test Value)	Value	0.571	0.622	0.627	0.448	0.494
	Category	Very Strong (≥0.35)	★	★	★	★

Table 6 includes four indices assessing the quality of the structural model. Adjusted R^2 values for all dimensions of ethical HR policies—Motivation & Communication (0.91), Selection & Recruitment (0.94), Empowerment (0.94), Compensation (0.83), and Performance Management (0.62)—are all classified as Very Strong (≥0.67). The Goodness of Fit (GOF) index equals 0.777, confirming an overall Very Strong model fit. Moreover, Q^2 values (predictive relevance) are also very strong (≥0.35), indicating that the structural model demonstrates excellent predictive capability and robustness across all dimensions.

Discussion

The present study aimed to validate a model of ethical policies of human resource managers in the processes of employee separation and redeployment at medical sciences universities in the western region of the country. The results obtained from testing the research model using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) indicated that all five dimensions identified in the qualitative phase exert a positive and statistically significant effect on the ethical policies of human resource managers (given that all t-values exceeded the critical value of 1.96).

Among these dimensions, Empowerment demonstrated the strongest effect, with a path coefficient of 0.97 (97%), indicating its paramount importance in shaping ethical HR policies. This was followed by Selection and Recruitment with a path coefficient of 0.97, and Motivation and Communication with a coefficient of 0.96, ranking second and third, respectively.

The dimension of Compensation, with a coefficient of 0.91, also showed a strong and significant influence on the ethical policy model. Finally, although Performance Management exhibited a comparatively lower path coefficient (0.65), it nonetheless maintained a positive and statistically significant effect on ethical HR policies. Accordingly, all main research hypotheses concerning the impact of the five dimensions on ethical policies of human resource managers were confirmed.

Based on the totality of the findings, it can be concluded that the results of content analysis combined with the confirmed model fit clearly demonstrate that the formulation of ethical policies for human resource management in separation and redeployment processes within medical sciences universities in the western region is a vital and structured necessity.

The proposed model—comprising five core components: Selection and Recruitment, Motivation and Communication, Performance Management, Compensation, and Empowerment—not only enjoys high content validity as assessed by experts, but its structural validity has also been satisfactorily confirmed. This structural confirmation implies that ethical policies should not be treated as peripheral considerations or supplementary guidelines, but rather must be systematically and integrally embedded across all managerial HR processes.

The ultimate objective of this model is to ensure procedural and distributive justice, transparency, and meritocracy in sensitive decision-making related to employee movement. This is particularly critical given that the findings align with prior research emphasizing the role of ethics and justice in reducing turnover intentions and enhancing workforce stability. Such outcomes are essential for

sustaining the effectiveness and continuity of elite human capital in medical–educational environments.

The final model targets ethical management of the employee life cycle and, by providing a validated operational framework, helps prevent ethical and legal crises arising from opaque or unjust separation and redeployment decisions. Each of the five components strengthens a specific dimension of organizational ethics. For example, Performance Management ensures that separation decisions are grounded in objective evidence rather than personal bias, while Motivation and Communication create a foundation for honest dialogue and organizational support.

This comprehensive approach not only contributes to reducing job stress and increasing managerial commitment and engagement, as documented in previous studies, but also supports the employer brand of medical sciences universities. Consequently, the successful implementation of this model is expected to enhance not only internal HR processes but also organizational trust and legitimacy at the regional level.

Despite its contributions, the study faced several limitations primarily related to the nature of the statistical population and the organizational environment governing medical sciences universities. The research topic—ethics in separation and redeployment processes—is inherently highly sensitive and, in some cases, subject to organizational confidentiality. As a result, some participants exercised caution in providing complete or fully candid responses, particularly regarding dimensions with lower mean scores such as Performance Evaluation, which may have affected the precision of reality perception.

Additionally, the heavy workload of managers and executive staff in educational, clinical, and administrative settings—especially in the aftermath of public health crises—rendered coordination for in-depth interviews and accurate questionnaire completion time-consuming and challenging. Finally, ongoing instability and frequent changes in regulations and managerial structures within the public sector and the Ministry of Health functioned as macro-level factors influencing respondents' perceptions of existing and stable policies during the data collection phase. These factors were entirely beyond the researcher's control.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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