Investigating the Attitude of Iranian Red Crescent Society towards Rescue and Relief of Tourists; A Case Study: Red Crescent Society of Kermanshah Province, Iran

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: Since the 2000s, tourism has become the most widespread activity on a global scale. Tourism, with its features, is always prone to any accident at a micro or a critical level, and this requires the action of the rescuers to reduce the disasters or to save the injured during their journey. The Red Crescent Society, as the largest non-governmental organization, carries out activities in the areas of rescue and relief, medicine and rehabilitation, and in other sectors. The aim of this study was to investigate the attitude of Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) in rescue and relief of tourists from various accidents and disasters.

METHODS: In this descriptive-analytical survey, the research community consisted of the members of Red Crescent Society in Kermanshah Province, Iran, including 135 instructors, relief workers, rescuers, rapid responses, and staffs. The sampling was performed using simple random sampling method. The research tool was a researcher-made questionnaire, which validity was evaluated by the experts of the Red Crescent Society, social sciences, and geography, and the reliability was calculated as 0.92 using Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was done using Spearman correlation and Kruskal-Wallis tests.

FINDINGS: The attitude of the statistical society towards the subject was evaluated as good (mean: 1.78). Their attitude towards the overall performance of the Red Crescent Society in travel management was very good (mean: 1.95). Respectively, the equipment and facilities of the organization (mean: 2.17), the practical skills and operational capabilities of the forces (mean: 2.13), and the establishment of fixed and mobile relief bases at the provincial level (mean: 2.03) played greater role based on the attitude of study participants (P<0.01 for all).

CONCLUSION: The attitude of the Red Crescent Society of Kermanshah Province was considered good and acceptable for rescuing tourists and travelers. To achieve more favorable performance, especially in rescue and relief, more studies are needed on the strengths and weaknesses.

Keywords: Attitude; Red Crescent Society; Rescue and Relief; Tourists; Kermanshah Province

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Introduction

Since 2000s, tourism has been considered as the most extensive activity on a global scale and in recent years, several events including open borders, emergence of welfare societies, free exchange of information, attractive destinations, advent of information technology (IT), and reduced travel costs all have led to a prominent position for tourism and generally for recreational activities in modern societies, to the extent that tourist mobility is regarded as a positive phenomenon in modern life brought (1).

Today, tourism is considered as one of the most important and dynamic activities worldwide,

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with the growing number of domestic and foreign tourists globally and the resulting economic benefits for the societies. In today conditions, events and crises and their management is an important issue which is also associated with tourism and its related activities. It seems that tourism, with its features, is always prone to any accident at a micro or a critical level (2) and this requires the action of the rescuers to reduce the disasters or to save the injured during their journey. All the provinces of Iran, including Kermanshah Province, benefit from numerous tourist attractions and are visited by tourists from different parts of the country throughout the year. During New Year holydays of the year 1397 AH (2018), half a million tourists visited Kermanshah's tourist attractions (3).

The Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran is a non-profit organization and a member of the International Red Cross Society. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement carries out humanitarian and relief activities in Iran and other countries in special situations. This organization consists of several sections that include a wide range of medical, health, education, and relief services (4). In addition, this organization is one of the public institutions that is responsible for the rescue operations in unexpected events on the basis of the tasks defined in its statute, and under the fourth and fifth plans of development, it is responsible for the of public and specialized rescue training to prepare the individuals and mitigate the adverse effects of disasters. This organization fulfills significant efforts in order to provide qualitatively and quantitatively satisfactory service to the affected people (5). The vision of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCs) is inspiration, encouragement, facilitation, and promotion at all times. All forms of humanitarian activities by national societies are aimed at preventing and resolving human suffering and thus helping them to preserve and promote human dignity and peace in the world. Based on its 2020 strategy, IFRCs follows three strategic objectives: preserving life, protecting livelihoods, and strengthening disaster and crisis recovery; enabling healthy and safe living; and promoting social inclusion and culture of non-violence and peace (6).

Most activities of the population focus on disaster relief, in addition, it serves as a charity organization with the establishment of health and rehabilitation centers, youth and volunteers' organizations, as well as the production of medicines and medical equipment and in other related fields (7).

With the establishment of rescue bases in inter-city areas of the country, especially in the main axes and inter-city roads, high-traffic mountainous areas, and safety zones of the coastal strips, while maintaining full preparedness, the Red Crescent Society provides specialized rescue services to the affected citizens in such areas. The services in the relief sector include providing housing, emergency feeding, and psychological support, and in the rescue sector, the services include the search for the lost individuals, findings victims of the accidents, technical rescue and releasing these individuals and transferring them to treatment centers in the shortest time possible (8). Initially, the Red Crescent Society roadside assistance center was established on the difficult to pass crossroads of the main roads of the country to accommodate, feed, and provide emergency assistance to passengers and transport them to medical centers. Recently, this organization has been working to provide fixed and temporary bases, portable stations and ambulances, rescue vehicles, and additional operational forces on the high-traffic highways and entrances of cities in the context of its humanitarian duties to conduct rapid search and rescue operations in road accidents (4), in addition to seeking to perform its duty of service by utilizing modern knowledge as well as awareness on the problems and needs of the affected people (9).

The rescue team is a trained and voluntary group serving in collaboration with other relevant departments, the main and immediate duty of whom is to search for and rescue the individuals in the affected areas. Providing first aid, evacuating the injured and transferring them to the health centers, and also providing temporary outpatient services to survivors, are among the activities of the rescue team (9). In fact, in accordance with the regulations, relief agenda, and the country's comprehensive relief plan, the rescue and relief activities of the Red Crescent Society are summarized in three stages: pre-accident (preparedness), during accident (response), and post-accident (normalization) stages. The rescue organization is responsible for providing relief services in the event of natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, droughts, volcano outbursts, and so on domestically and abroad (10).

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The valuable services of the Iranian Red Crescent Society in extensive national and international operations such as the 1990 Manjil-Rudbar earthquake, 2003 Bam earthquake, the Iraqi refugee crisis in 1991, road and mountain rescue, providing relief services in Pakistan flood, Japan earthquake and tsunami, famine and drought in Somalia, etc., have made the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) take a special place among the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and become one of the 10 most powerful populations in the world in responding in disasters (11).

Tourism, with its multifaceted functions and increasing growth, is a key driver of social, cultural, economic, and environmental variations of tourist attractions at various international, national, and local levels. Security is the most fundamental element in developing a tourism development strategy; tourism has a multifaceted relationship with security at national and regional levels, and any insecurity at the various levels causes irreparable damage to tourism. The presence of improper tourism infrastructures, including roads and natural problems such as snow, frost, and humanitarian challenges such as traffic accidents, are factors involved in road insecurity and accidents, especially during the holidays, when many tourists travel to different parts of the country (12). With these interpretations, the IRCS is responsible for providing relief and other required services to help the injured people and the ones facing difficulties in the roads (travelers, tourists). Number 112 has been provided as a national rescue line or (rescue call) for the people to call this number in case of any accident and the need for rescue.

The number of rescue operations in the first five months of the 2018 reached more than 16 thousand road, mountain, marine, coastal rescue operations, and operations in natural disasters. The average time for the rescuers to reach the scene from the time of announcement to deployment of the first aid group was estimated to be 8 minutes and 23 seconds (13).

In examining the Red Crescent Society relief operations in the 2012 earthquake in East Azerbaijan Province, Iran, from the viewpoint of the provincial Red Crescent Society managers, Oveisi et al. believed that proper planning should be performed at the macro level among all organs and organizations such as military organs, ministries, councils, municipalities, governorates, district and rural officials, and the Red Crescent Society, in addition to micro-level planning within the population (14).

In examining travelers attitudes towards the Nowruz Travelers National Guide Plan of the Youth Organization of the IRCS in April 2009, Mozaffar et al. believed that relief efforts were of paramount importance for travelers and that the Youth Organization of the IRCS should prioritize these issues (15).

In assessing the efficiency of the Red Crescent Society Road Assistance bases in Yazd Province, Iran, in the Nowruz Plan, Seddiqi and Morovatti Sharif Abadi believed that 4 of the 13 bases in the Road Assistance Plan were fully operational and the rest were not functioning properly (16).

In investigating the necessity and importance of the role of the Red Crescent Society in natural disaster management, Samadi Miarkolaei and Babaei declared that through developing proper plans and prior preparedness, the damage and duration of the disasters could be reduced to a large degree (17).

Regarding the assessment of the attitude of the affected individuals towards the Red Crescent Society relief operations in the East Azerbaijan earthquake in 2012, Aghamiri et al. believed that the people's satisfaction with the Red Crescent Society performance was good given the magnitude of the event (18).

For nearly two decades, the Red Crescent authorities have highlighted the importance of the relief bases on the disaster-prone roads of the country based on the urgent needs of the tourists and travelers and as the government assistant, they have set up rescue and relief bases in line with the humanitarian duties (16). The present study was accomplished with the aim to investigate the attitude of the Red Crescent Society members in Kermanshah Province regarding the rescue of the tourists in different incidents.

Methods

The present study was a descriptive-analytical and survey type in which the documentary and field sources were used for data collection. The statistical population of the study consisted of members of Kermanshah Red Crescent Society including instructors, relief workers, rescuers, rapid response team (RRT), and employees as more than 135 individuals. The sample size was determined to be 100 using the Cochran's formula and the subjects were selected using the simple

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random sampling method. Based on this method, a list of all the staff was obtained from the Red Crescent Society and their names were written in some pieces of paper and 100 of them were randomly selected by the researcher.

The study instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire with the validity confirmed by the opinions of the Red Crescent experts as well as the social sciences and geography faculty members and with the reliability confirmed using a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92. In addition, the questionnaire items were rated in the Likert range from (very good to very poor).

Moreover, the SPSS software was used for data analysis. Since the data scale was sequential and qualitative, nonparametric tests of Spearman correlation coefficient and means comparison (Kruskal-Wallis) were applied.

Findings

Based on the results, the statistical population under study consisted of 52% and 47% men and women, respectively. In addition, the minimum and maximum age of the respondents was respectively 18 and 67 years. Moreover, 53% and 44% of them were single and married respectively. Furthermore, the results revealed that the highest and lowest education levels were the bachelor's degree and secondary school as 53% and 1%, respectively. The working history of the subjects was classified into the three categories of 2-10, 11-20, and 21-30 years, with the frequency and percentage expressed in Table 1.

Table 2 demonstrates the results of the attitude level of the study groups. Given the responses, the respondents' attitude indicated that their overall view of the Red Crescent Society and performance was good with a mean of 1.78. The respondents' attitude toward the overall performance of the Red Crescent Society in the travel management was assessed as very good with a mean value of 1.95 and the equipment and facilities variable of the organization was ranked first with the mean value of 2.17, followed by the practical skills the mean value of 2.13 and high operational power of the forces and fixed and mobile bases ranking second and third at the provincial level, respectively.

The results and outputs of the Spearman correlation test in Table 3 indicate that there is a significant and positive relationship between the attitudes of the statistical population with the Red Crescent Society performance in tourist rescue in all the items.

The viewpoints of the independent occupational groups in the statistical population on the performance of the Red Crescent Society in rescuing tourists were assessed using the Kruskal-Wallis means comparison test, indicating a significant difference in the viewpoints with a mean of 18.488, a degree of freedom of 4, and a significance level of 0.001.

Conclusion

Tourism is always accompanied by events, or at the macro level, crises besides the pleasures and enjoyments of attractions and landscapes. The Red Crescent Society as a public organization is committed to delivering humanitarian and relief activities in natural disasters and unexpected events. Investigating the attitudes of the society members towards the activities and providing rescue services to tourists and travelers in and out of cities is of particular importance.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of occupation and education of the statistical population

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage	Education	Frequency	Percentage	Grouping years of service	Frequency	Percentage
Rescuer	29	29	Secondary school	1	1	2-10	72	72
Relief worker	36	36	Diploma	15	15	11-20	15	15
Rescue instructor	7	7	Associate's degree	16	16	21-30	9	9
Rapid response staff	4	4	Bachelor's degree	53	53			
Red Crescent employee	19	19	Master s degree	14	14			
Unanswered	5			1			4	

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Table 2. Items and the Red Crescent Society attitude measurement level in tourist rescue and relief

Item	Response percentage					Unanswered	Mean	Attitude	Ranking
	Very good	Good	Moderate	Poor	Very poor				
Red Crescent Society overall performance in travel management	38	32	20	1	5	4	1.95	Very good	8
Providing final statistics and reports to the operations unit	30	46	18	1	3	2	1.97	Good	7
Psychological and social support for the injured individuals	29	47	17	3	2	2	2.01	Good	5
Transferring the injured individuals to health centers	40	41	17	-	-	2	1.77	Good	16
Emergency housing and feeding of the injured	36	41	19	2	-	2	1.89	Good	12
First aid to the injured	34	43	18	1	1	3	1.89	Good	12
Search and rescue services	35	39	22	1	1	2	1.92	Good	10
Order in all stages of operations	27	52	16	-	-	5	1.88	Good	13
Coordination of teams with relevant organizations	32	40	21	3	2	2	2.02	Good	4
Coordination of relief teams	28	49	17	1	3	2	1.98	Good	6
Organizing relief teams	30	40	26	2	-	2	2.02	Good	4
Teamwork temperament	35	43	18	2	2	-	1.93	Good	9
Commitment to teamwork	34	50	15	1	-	-	1.84	Good	15
Triage of the injury during rescue	33	41	24	-	-	2	1.91	Good	11
Timely presence of forces at the scene of events	33	39	24	-	3	1	1.97	Good	7
Organization equipment and supplies	25	40	28	-	7	-	2.17	Good	1
Establishment of fixed and mobile relief bases at provincial level	28	48	19	2	3	-	2.03	Good	3
Rapidity of action and rapid response of forces	36	44	18	-	2	-	1.86	Good	14
High operational capacity of forces	20	49	29	-	2	-	2.13	Good	2
High expertise of forces in operation	29	46	23	1	-	1	1.97	Good	7
Practical skills	24	44	29	2	1	-	2.13	Good	2
Sufficient relief forces	30	49	17	3	1	-	1.98	Good	6
Total	100						1.78	Good	-

The study findings revealed a good attitude of the statistical population towards the subject in 22 items examined, as the overall mean was calculated as 1.78. The mean value of assessment of the respondents of the variable of equipment and facilities of the organization was ranked first, followed by the high operational capability and practical skills of the forces ranking second, and the establishment of the fixed and mobile relief bases at the provincial ranking third. According to the Spearman correlation coefficient, all items were significant. Therefore, the staff of the Red Crescent Society of Kermanshah Province had a good and acceptable attitude towards the rescue of tourists and travelers.

The findings of the study confirmed those presented by Oveisi et al. (14). In fact, there should be coordination among the various organizations involved in tourism and the Red Crescent Society in the field of rescue of tourists, and this coordination should also be established among the Red Crescent staff and activists. This coordination makes it possible for other organizations to help the Red Crescent Society in case of limited facilities, or when there is a need for the specialized individuals in tourism in order to obtain better results. Similar to the study by Mozaffar et al. (15), the current study concluded that there is a high potential in the Red Crescent Society regarding the tourism affairs.

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Table 3. Spearman correlation coefficient of the Red Crescent Society variables in the assessment of attitudes towards the tourist rescue and relief

Item	Correlation coefficient	P
Red Crescent overall performance in travel management	1	-
Providing final statistics and reports to the operations unit	0.550	< 0.001
Psychological and social support for the injured individuals	0.399	< 0.0001
Transferring the injured individuals to health centers	0.540	< 0.0001
Emergency housing and feeding of the injured	0.500	< 0.0001
First aid to the injured	0.381	< 0.0001
Search and rescue services	0.479	< 0.0001
Order in all stages of operations	0.385	< 0.0001
Coordination of teams with relevant organizations	0.331	0.001
Coordination of relief teams	0.452	< 0.0001
Organizing relief teams	0.434	< 0.0001
Teamwork temperament	0.357	< 0.0001
Commitment to teamwork	0.439	< 0.0001
Triage of the injury during rescue	0.584	< 0.0001
Timely presence of forces at the scene of events	0.312	0.002
Organization equipment and supplies	0.405	< 0.0001
Establishment of fixed and mobile relief bases at provincial level	0.367	< 0.0001
Rapidity of action and rapid response of forces	0.482	< 0.0001
High operational capacity of forces	0.316	0.002
High expertise of forces in operation	0.389	< 0.0001
Practical skills	0.424	< 0.0001
Sufficient relief forces	0.492	< 0.0001

In this study, the facilities and equipment as well as the performance of the bases were evaluated to be appropriate and the rapidity of action of the Red Crescent forces regarding the problems faced by tourists was in a suitable level. This is contrary to the opinion issued in the study by Seddiqi and Morovatti Sharif Abadi (16) who believed that the performance of the Red Crescent Road bases was inappropriate; the opinion in the current study was from the perspective of the Red Crescent staff, however the opinion in the study by Seddiqi and Morovatti Sharif Abadi (16) was a type of performance assessment conducted by the researchers themselves and part of this discrepancy may therefore be related to the type of study and the statistical population selected.

Additionally, as the study by Samadi Miarkolaei et al. (17), the present study also showed that the Red Crescent Society plays an important role in crisis management, especially in the tourism sector. Of course, the key to success in this task is the proper and principled planning by the Red Crescent Society. The above finding is also in line with the results of the study by Aghamiri et al. (18). They also believed that the overall performance of the Red Crescent should be considered in terms of the extent of its activity, and given the volume of activities of the Red Crescent Society, its performance was assessed to be as appropriate.

According to the current finding, the respondents' views and attitudes regarding the Red Crescent Society performance in rescuing tourists were desirable, and the Red Crescent Society of Kermanshah Province had a suitable performance in the face of various events that might occur to tourists during their trips, particularly in the rescue field. This becomes especially prominent taking into account the fact that Kermanshah accommodates a considerable number of tourists. Of course, the tourist facilities and equipment of this population should be increased in order to perform better. The Red Crescent Society needs to root its strengths and weaknesses and devise more appropriate and desirable actions to achieve much better performance, especially in the rescue field, so that as a non-profit organization better respond to the injured, tourists, and travelers on their journey by providing rescue services.

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None

Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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