

## Designing a Policy Capacity Measurement Model for Rescue and Relief Services in Iranian Red Crescent Society

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### Original Article

#### Abstract

**INTRODUCTION:** The continuity and development of rescue and relief services requires recognition and improvement of the capacities of this field, and above all, it requires a tool to measure the capacity of this policy. The purpose of this research is to design a model for measuring the policy capacity of providing rescue and relief services in Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS).

**METHOD:** This qualitative and applied research was conducted with the content analysis method. In order to collect data, the policy capacity literature and laws in the field of "rescue and relief" and "crisis management" were reviewed. About 12 experts were selected and studied as the statistical population using the snowball method until reaching theoretical saturation. Data were analyzed by qualitative content analysis method (inductive approach) and Maxqda-20 software. Content validity and reliability were checked with Content Validity Index (CVI) test and Holsti's method, respectively.

**FINDINGS:** According to the findings, about 113 indicators were identified which were classified in three levels including individual (34 indicators), organizational (48 indicators) and systemic (31 indicators). All these three levels consist of the subcategories such as analytical, operational and political-social capacity.

**CONCLUSION:** Policy capacity is a multi-level and multi-dimensional concept. For developing of rescue and relief services, the capacity status of this policy should be determined at different levels and dimensions and due to the needs and conditions, capacities should be upgraded. However, it should not be enough to develop the capacity at one level or one dimension.

**Keywords:** Policy capacity; Rescue and relief; Rescue and relief Capacity; Red Crescent Society.

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#### Introduction

Natural disasters and crises are among the important public issues due to their depth, scope and their impact on people's lives in the field of public policy, that have received a lot of attention and emphasis, and successfully dealing with them is a manifestation of the competence and capability of public policy systems in the world. However, despite the importance of reducing the risk of natural disasters and the need to increase the ability to deal with crises, optimal management to reduce the risk of environmental hazards is still a global challenge (1).

Iran is one of the ten disaster-prone countries in the world with a high vulnerability to natural disasters; therefore, planning to deal with disasters and crises in the country is of special importance. From past times until now, policies have been developed and implemented for preparing and dealing with crises, disasters and incidents.

According to law (2), Crisis Management Organization is responsible for crisis managing in Iran and RCS as the head of the specialized working groups of this organization (Relief, Rescue and Public Education Working Group) plays a fundamental role in this field.

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According to the constitution (3), RCS is responsible for providing relief and medical services during natural disasters and accidents, providing first-aid in unexpected events, and also planning and taking action to prepare for dealing with disasters and incidents. Since its formation, the Society has provided valuable services in numerous crises; and currently, it is among the top five Societies among 192 National Societies in terms of capability and relief and humanitarian actions measures (4).

However, for more preparedness in facing crises and disasters and development of rescue and relief services, it is necessary to recognize and improve the capacities of this field. Because having the right capacity is a prerequisite for the success of the policy and the failure to implement the policy can be attributed to the reduction of the policy capacity. Therefore, it is necessary to find solutions to develop the capacity of the policy so that its implementation is successful (5).

Policy capacity means the ability to build the future through collective choice and will (6). It determines how well policy actors can address public problems (7), and high levels of capacity are associated with superior policy outputs and outcomes (8). Capacity building is an evidence-based process that seeks to empowerment of people, organizations and systems to perform core tasks and improve it over time. For this purpose, the question of what capacity should be built, for whom, in what subject and with what purpose, must be explained precisely (5).

In the traditional policy-making approach, there is a clear distinction between formulation and implementation, and in case of unsuccessful implementation, the implementers are considered guilty. However, according to many thinkers, including Nakamura and Smallwood (9), there is an overlap between formulation and implementation. Pressman and Wildafsky (10) consider policy-making to be an interactive and integrated process between goal setting and action, and they believe that formulation and implementation should not be separate from each other, and they consider the biggest problem of implementation to be neglecting the necessary preparations in the formulation stage.

O'Toole (11) emphasizes the need to pay attention to the policy context, and according to Berman (12), theories independent of the implementation context are unlikely to provide an accurate explanation. Many researches consider

the resources and characteristics of the executive body as an important variable in implementation. Sharpoff (13) and Smith (14) have paid attention to executive and coordination networks.

Ripley and Franklin (15) emphasize cultural and political contexts and Lane (16) points to responsibility and trust. Edward (17) has focused on the direct and indirect effects of communication and structure for successful implementation. Goggin et al. (18) have spoken about organizational and ecological capacity, and according to Najam (19), the capacity of executive organizations, policy content, the nature of the institutional context, commitment and cooperation and support of coalitions, with interaction and mutual influence on each other, influence the implementation.

Based on the investigations, some problems related to the provision of rescue and relief services for the IRCS in the country include the following: lack of specialized staff (20), lack of equipment and rescue vehicles and their wear and tear, lack of air fleet, lack of road and mountain aid bases, lack of support centers in the country, financial limitations, salary status of relief aiders (21), people's unpreparedness in facing accidents and disasters (less than 20%), lack of sufficient knowledge of the duties of the RCS. (22)

In fact, the problem that this research is facing is the lack of resources and skills necessary to provide rescue and relief services in the IRCS and the ambiguity that the researchers is involved with is the way to measure the existing capacities of rescue and relief. Considering the shortcomings of the existing measures and also according to the necessity that the designed measure should be appropriate to the used field, this research seeks to "design a model for measuring the rescue and relief policy capacity in the IRCS".

In this research, policy capacity is defined as "the set of skills and resources necessary to carry out policy tasks" similar to the definition of Gleeson et al. (2011) (23) and Wu et al. (2015) (6).

The measurement model obtained in this research was designed by adapting a nested model of policy capacity (6) in three analytical, operational, political dimensions and three individual, organizational and systemic levels, and its specific indicators were identified and categorized through interviews with experts. (Table 1)

The presented model is based on the assumption that by identifying and developing existing and needed capacities, policies with higher quality can be developed and come closer to successful implementation. This model can also provide a tool for policymakers and executives to have a better understanding of the current situation and provide and apply more accurate solutions to improve services.

### Methods

The current qualitative research is developmental and applied in terms of its purpose, which was carried out with the content analysis method. In this research, the capacity to provide rescue and rescue services was investigated by paying attention to and studying the literature of policy making, literature of institutionalism (institutional development) and capacity building. Literature study and interviews were conducted in 2022 and 2023.

In order to collect data, the policy capacity literature and laws in the field of rescue and rescue and crisis management were reviewed and then interviews with experts were conducted in this field. The snowball sampling method was used to identify the experts and the interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached. About 12 experts were interviewed in the field of rescue and relief, all of whom had a PhD degree and at least 10 years of experience in this field. The experts are the directors of the Rescue and Relief Organization (in various fields), the Volunteers' Organization, Youth Organization, Deputy of Education, Research & Technology of RCS, Department of Health of RCS, Treatment and Rehabilitation, Department of International Affairs of the RCS, as well as the Iran Helal Applied Science Higher Education Institute. Data was analyzed with qualitative content analysis technique and Maxqda-20 software.

Content Validity Index (CVI) test was used to check the content validity and Holsti's method was used to check the reliability of the structure respectively. To confirm validity, the opinions of four experts in the field of rescue and relief (Rescue & Relief Organization of RCS, Crisis Management Organization and Crisis Prevention and Management Organization of Tehran Municipality) and three university professors in the field of public administration and public policy were used. Finally, the obtained structure was confirmed by experts (CVI>0.79) and

changes were made in the structure based on the suggestions. By calculation and review the Holsti's coefficient of reliability (greater than 0.7), the reliability of the structure was confirmed.

### Findings

Data analysis (coding and categorization) was done according to the following steps. In the first stage, the data was coded and classified, which resulted in the identification of 113 indicators (codes) to measure the capacity of the policy. In the next step, these codes were categorized into 30 subcategories and finally into nine categories and three dimensions such as analytical, operational and political and three levels such as individual, organizational and systemic that form the concept of "policy capacity". The research findings are as follows:

*At the individual level (34 indicators):*

- A) Analytical capacity includes: 1) Expertise; 2) Skill in analysis and evaluation.
- B) Operational capacity includes: 1) Executive ability; 2) Management ability.
- C) Political capacity includes: 1) Knowing the stakeholders; 2) Knowledge about the political-social process; 3) Communication skills, negotiation and building consensus.

*At the organizational level (48 indicators):*

- A) Analytical capacity includes: 1) Evidence collection; 2) Access to people with analytical capacity; 3) Evidence analysis and evaluation, and 4) Information sharing.
- B) Operational capacity includes 1) Human resources management; 2) Financial resources management; 3) Support (logistics); 4) Coordination of internal processes; 5) Organizational support; 6) Administrative accountability.
- C) Political capacity includes 1) Organizational legitimacy; 2) Access to authorities; 3) Processes for stakeholder participation.

*At the systemic level (31 indicators):*

- A) Analytical capacity includes: 1) Knowledge; 2) Access to information; 3) Policy analysis & evaluation.
- B) Operational capacity includes 1) Rule of law; 2) Inter-governmental interaction; 3) Coherence of the policy network; 4) Supply of policy resources.
- C) Political capacity includes 1) Policy support; 2) Institutional trust; 3) Public participation. (Tables 2- 4)

**Table 1.** Policy capacity: skills and resources (7)

Resources	Skills		
	Analytical	Operational	Political
Individual	Individual analytical capacity	Individual operational capacity	Individual political capacity
Organizational	Organizational analytical capacity	Organizational operational capacity	Organizational political capacity
Systemic	Systemic analytical capacity	Systemic operational capacity	Systemic political capacity

**Table 2.** Dimensions, components and indicators of rescue and relief policy capacity in individual level

Dimensions	Components	Indicators
Analytical	Knowledge (expertise)	Educational background (related to organizational role)/Organizational training (related to the organizational role)/Familiarity with tasks, standards and instructions (related to the organizational role)
	Analysis and evaluation skills	Research background (related to the job field)/ The ability to analyze issues (related to the job field)/ The effectiveness of the proposed solutions (in solving or reducing the problems in the field of activity)
Operational/ managerial	Executive abilities (Related to the role)	Technical skill (to play an organizational role)/Physical fitness (to play the organizational role)/ Ability (skill) to use equipment (related to the organizational role)/Ability (skill) to maintain equipment (related to the organizational role)/Ability to comply with safety principles and work standards
	Management ability (related to the role)	Ability to plan actions/Foresight in decisions and actions/Creativity at work/Ability to manage work relationships/Ability to inform about actions/Ability to manage time in actions (deciding and acting on time)/Ability to behave rationally (without confusion and emotional/ behavior)/ Ability to do team work/Ability to resolve conflicts and disputes at work/Ability to guide, support and develop the skills of others/Trusting the abilities of colleagues and assigning responsibilities to them
Political-social	Identifying stakeholders	Acquaintance with the demands of stakeholders (in the field of work)/Acquaintance with the positions of stakeholders (in the field of work)/Acquaintance with the resources and facilities of the stakeholders (in the field of work)/Knowing the position and position of stakeholders (in the field of work)
	Knowledge about the political-social process	Awareness of stakeholders' interactions (in the field of work)/Awareness of political-social limitations and the feasibility of actions/Awareness of the impact of political-social processes on actions/Ability to identify opportunities and use them to advance actions
	Communication, negotiation and consensus building skills	Networking ability with job stakeholders and communicating with them/ Ability to consult and negotiate with stakeholders/ Ability to inform stakeholders (to provide them with the necessary evidence)/Ability to attract stakeholders' support (to advance the goals)

**Table 3.** Dimensions, components and indicators of rescue and relief policy capacity in organizational level

Dimensions	Components	Indicators
Analytical	Evidence collection	Guidelines for data collection (documentation, etc.) /Existence of required information systems/Responsiveness of existing information systems/Carrying out researches and study projects
	Access to people with analytical capacity	Presence of specialists and capable experts/Availability of experts and specialists
	Analysis and evaluation of evidence	Existence of instructions for analysis and evaluation of data/Analysis and review of organizational documents/Evaluation of processes and instructions/Using the results of research and study projects/Updating work procedures
	Information sharing	Existence of procedures for sharing information/Employees' access to required information
Operational/ managerial	Human resources management	Access to the required human resources/Transparency of people's roles and duties/Organizing manpower/Holding training courses/Holding empowerment courses/Meritocracy in appointments/Management stability/Financing (salaries, benefits and bonuses) of employees/Encouraging and motivating employees/Clear targeting of work area actions/Evaluation of people's performance
	Financial resources management	Identification and regular review of financial resources/Provision of financial resources/ Appropriate distribution of financial resources in different sectors
	Support (logistics)	Access to the equipment (needed to do the work)/Access to the infrastructure (needed to do the work)

<b>Political-social</b>	Coordination (in internal processes)	Coordination between organizational units (interdepartmental coordination)/Coordination between organizations, deputies, etc. in the RCS of the province/ Coordination between RCS (in the provinces)
	Organizational support	Ensuring the safety of employees in the workplace/ Psychological support of employees/ Organization's legal and judicial protections for employees (if necessary)
	Administrative accountability	Informing actions (reporting) /Managing executive (operational) violations/Paying attention to service recipients satisfaction /Dealing with public complaints
	Organizational legitimacy	Existence of legal orders (laws and regulations) to provide services/Having the necessary authority to perform duties/ Performance acceptability from the eyes of people and officials
	Access to authorities (Outside the organization)	Interacting with key stakeholders/Easy access to officials at different levels
	Processes for stakeholder participation	Paying attention to stakeholders (in actions and decisions)/ Consultation with stakeholders (in actions and decisions)/ Possibility of stakeholders' participation (in actions and decisions)/Ability to attract and engage stakeholders

**Table 4.** Dimensions, components and indicators of rescue and relief policy capacity in systemic level

Dimensions	Components	Indicators
<b>Analytical</b>	Knowledge	Knowledge (related to the field of work at the extra-organizational level)/ Knowledge production systems (universities, think tanks, etc.)
	Access to information	The information systems (related to the field of work)/Access to extra-organizational information systems (related to the field of work)
	Policy analysis and evaluation	Analysis and evaluation of actions (at the extra-organizational level)/ Guidelines and standards for evaluating actions (at the extra-organizational level)/ Access to relevant consultants and experts (at the extra-organizational level)
<b>Operational/ managerial</b>	Rule of law	Upstream laws and documents (related to the field of work)/ Clarity of the roles and responsibilities of related institutions in laws and upstream documents (laws transparency)/ Commitment of partner organizations to fulfill their role (law implementation)/ Avoiding unprofessional, political and extra-legal interventions
	Intra-governmental interaction	Acquaintance of the institutions with their duties and other cooperating organizations/Cooperation between governmental organizations (collaborating organizations)/Holding coordination meetings between partner organizations /Holding training courses for partner organizations/Holding maneuvers and exercises (periodically) jointly with partner organizations
	Policy network coherence	Coordination of partner organizations and the RCS/Respect and mutual trust of partner organizations towards the RCS/Existence of integrated management (for decisions making)
	Supply of policy resources	Provision of non-governmental financial resources (cash aids)/Provision of non-governmental resources (Non-cash aid, facilities and equipment)/Provision of governmental resources (necessary budget allocation)/ The possibility of using the facilities and equipment of governmental organizations (if necessary)/ International sources (if necessary)
<b>Political-social</b>	Policy support	Support of political authorities for rescue and relief actions /Legal and judicial support for rescue and relief actions
	Institutional trust	People's & officials confidence in organizations involved in rescue and relief (to take the necessary actions)/ People's confidence in the government (to take the necessary actions)
	Public participation	Public awareness about the dangers and rescue and relief process/People's readiness to face accidents and incidents (self-help and other help)/Voluntary services (people voluntary participation, NGOs and the private sector in the rescue and relief activities)

## Discussion and Conclusion

This research was conducted with the approach of designing accurate indicators to measure the capacities needed to provide rescue and relief services in the IRCS. The findings of this research showed that the rescue and relief policy capacity consists of what dimensions and elements and what indicators should be used to measure them.

The nested model of policy capacity provides a comprehensive and multifaceted conceptualization of policy capacity and nine types of sub-capacity related to each other, but in the studies, there was a gap in its operationalization and measurement of policy capacity. Studies in this field have often addressed one of the nine sub-capacities (24-28) and only a

few studies have investigated all nine sub-capacities (29- 32). In Iran, many researches have been conducted regarding public policies and their implementation (5 & 33-36).

Researches have been carried out in the field of crisis management, improvement of relief and treatment services, and investigation of causes and ways to improve services, but there was no research that specifically addressed the concept of policy capacity in the field of crisis management and especially in the field of relief and rescue in the country.

In the research conducted, shortcomings, differences in the description of policy capacities and sub-capacities, and the indicators provided are not clear. However, this is an opportunity to develop a policy capacity measurement tool that is

more transparently developed and applied to a specific policy review.

As mentioned, the conducted researches had a limited and one-dimensional view of policy capacity. This research does not consider the concept of policy capacity to be one-dimensional and considers the existence of necessary capacities at each of the individual, organizational and systemic levels as a necessary condition for providing rescue and relief services by emphasizing that the existence of capacity does not necessarily lead to better performance or success.

On the other hand, considering the context-oriented concepts, it should be said that the indicators presented in the literature in different contexts are not necessarily the same and should be designed due to the desired social context. In turn, the conducted researches have sought to develop the policy capacity model and provided indicators related to the field of study.

In this research, there may be similarities with previous research in terms of policy capacity dimensions at different levels, but due to the difference in the studied areas, different indicators were obtained compared to other researches to measure the capacity of rescue and relief policy.

Comparing the results of this research with the policy capacity literature, the following points can be mentioned:

At the "systemic level", the addition of the "policy resource provision" component with the following indicators, which were not mentioned in other studies such as: a) NGOs financial resources (cash donations); b) NGOs resources (non-cash contributions, facilities and equipment); c) Governmental budget allocation; d) Access to facilities and equipment of partner organizations; e) International resources.

At the "organizational level", the concept of "resource management" was proposed in past researches. In this research, this concept was divided into the components of a) Human resource management; b) Financial resource management, and c) Support (logistics).

In addition, according to the nature of rescue and relief services and the experts' emphasis, the "organizational support" component was added to "organizational-operational capacity" with the indicators of a) Safety of employees; b) Psychological support for employees; and c) Legal and judicial protection of the organization

for employees which was not mentioned in other researches.

At the "individual level" and in "individual-operational capacity", the existing literature only emphasizes on "leadership ability".

In this section, with the approval of experts, this dimension was divided into two components: 1)Executive abilities and 2)Managerial ability; which includes other indicators in addition to people's leadership abilities.

The presented model, while combining the existing literature and the opinions of rescue and relief experts, has differences with previous studies, according to its basic model (nested model of policy capacity). In this model, policy capacity is not limited to a specific stage of the policy process, but includes the entire policy process: formulation, implementation and evaluation. This concept is also not limited to the level of governance and includes a wide range of stakeholders (NGOs, private sector, international organizations etc.) that participate in policy processes. This model shows that the capacity of all policy stakeholders should be considered for policy development.

In general, it can be said that "policy capacity" is a multi-level and multi-dimensional concept and the policy success requires high levels of capacities in different dimensions and levels. Therefore, for the development of rescue and relief services, the capacity status of the policy at different levels and dimensions should be specified and upgraded based on the needs and conditions, and it should not be enough to develop the policy capacity at one level or a specific dimension.

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### Conflict of Interests

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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