

## Explaining the Role of Mass and Social Media in the Development of the Social Capital of the Red Crescent Society of Iran

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*Date of submission: 04 Dec.2022      Date of acceptance: 14 Apr.2023*

### Original Article

#### Abstract

**INTRODUCTION:** Improving the social capital of the Red Crescent Society can play an effective role in crisis management also control and increase productivity in responding to incidents. This research aimed to explain the role of mass and social media in the development of the social capital of the Iranian Red Crescent Society.

**METHODS:** This practical research was conducted using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The statistical population of the research in the qualitative part included 21 executive managers and pundits, who were selected using a purposeful and snowball sampling method. In the quantitative part, a total of 2,815 volunteer members of the Red Crescent Society formed the population, who were chosen by stratified random sampling method. The statistical data of the qualitative part were collected by holding semi-structured interviews, while those of the quantitative part were gathered using a questionnaire having content validity as well as the study of organizational documents. Data analysis in the qualitative part was performed through the thematic analysis method and in the quantitative part through the frequency and comparison of statistical data.

**FINDINGS:** The findings showed that the effective role of the media should not be neglected. It was revealed that mass and social media played a role in the development of the social capital of the Red Crescent Society through three important components, namely news and information, mass education, and accreditation.

**CONCLUSION:** According to the results of the current research, the Red Crescent Society can boost the productivity and effectiveness of humanitarian and public benefits programs and activities by understanding the very effective role of communication media and improving the level of cooperation and altruism culture in society with the help of mass media members, activists, and celebrities of social networks.

**Keywords:** Mass media; Red Crescent Society; Social capital; Social media

**How to cite this article:** Sedaghati N, Farahani A, Ghasemi H. **Explaining the Role of Mass and Social Media in the Development of the Social Capital of the Red Crescent Society of Iran.** *Sci J Rescue Relief* 2023; 15 (2):112-126.

#### Introduction

The term social capital has been used for more than a hundred years; however, it has become more common in recent decades. In the absence of social capital, other capitals seem to lose their efficiency and effectiveness. This capital comes from everyday interactions between people. Chudson Hanifen is one of the pioneers of social capital theory who assumes that social capital consists of assets that are highly important in people's daily lives, such

as good understanding, camaraderie, and friendship, a feeling of sympathy, and social relations among individuals and families that form a social unit (1). Social capital is often expressed by the rate of participation of people in collective life and the existence of the trust factor among them. As the social capital increases among people, it leads to mutual understanding, cooperation, meritocracy, boosted resilience, controlled temper, and increased self-

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confidence (2).

One of the key indicators of social capital is membership in formal and informal groups and social participation, and one of the important components that can be called valuable social capital is voluntary service. People's voluntary actions are a great asset to any society. Volunteering is an activity to help a person or community, without expecting to receive any material benefits or money. Volunteers work together to achieve common goals and somehow increase social capital in society, thus making society a better environment for everyone's life (3).

Every year, the country suffers many losses and casualties due to floods, earthquakes, road accidents, and other accidents and disasters. In accident-prone countries, the consequences of crises are among the factors that prevent development. The lack of awareness and preparation among people and officials is also a factor in aggravating injuries and casualties. According to the results of research in the past few years, Iran ranks third in the world after Indonesia and Bangladesh in terms of vulnerability to natural disasters, with 174,000 deaths in 30 years (4). Therefore, the Red Crescent Society, as the largest and most important relief organization in the country, can play a significant role in providing relief and reducing casualties. The Red Crescent Society, as a non-governmental organization, through humanitarian, educational, relief, and cultural activities, takes action to empower relief and the indicators of physical, spiritual, and social health of the society, by creating altruistic and humanitarian spirits.

Indeed, achieving the lofty goals of this organization, which are ensuring respect for people; striving to establish friendship, mutual understanding, and sustainable peace between nations; attempting to alleviate human suffering; and supporting human life and health without considering any discrimination between them, requires a suitable organizational structure, culture, and attitude as well as a favorable social identity in the society. This importance cannot be realized except by trying to guide the intervening conditions, influential environmental and organizational elements, and political, economic, cultural, and social drivers and facilitators of the society, which affect social trust and organizational goodwill.

The existence of social trust is a prerequisite for the existence of any society and its life-giving artery and is a reason for having a sympathetic and dynamic society. According to Sztompka, trust is an important component of social capital and is linked to meta-materialist values (5). Social trust is a requirement for the existence of service organizations because the improvement of the social capital level in society can be achieved through organizational goodwill, organizational transparency, and ultimately social trust. Red Crescent Society, as a charity and relief organization, needs marketing with an ethical approach to succeed in its plans to attract people's participation. That is because trust building and transparency are the basis of any social interaction between organizations and individuals and ultimately lead to audience satisfaction.

Soltani and Haghighi (2016), in research titled "Social capital and its impact on crisis management in cities", stated that there was a significant relationship between the components of social capital (i.e., trust, participation, support, confidence, sense of security, and value of life) and the variables of social crisis management (i.e., prevention, preparation, coping, and reconstruction) (6). Parsamehr et al. (2017), in a study aimed at explaining the role of social capital in the development of youth voluntary participation, pointed to four major components of social capital, namely social trust, social norm, social network, and social participation (7). In the same vein, Emadi et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between social trust and the tendency to participate voluntarily in the activities of the Red Crescent Society. They stated that social trust had a positive and moderate effect on people's voluntary participation (8). Seippel (2006), in a study, reported that social capital increased self-confidence, expanded social connections, and boosted moralism (9).

Therefore, it can be said that social trust is also influenced by some other factors and components. It seems that the media have a considerable and valuable role in increasing and decreasing social trust; to elaborate, with different information and analyses they provide to their audience, they gradually influence their value system and attitude. In the digital age, the world is a global village where people are informed about the news from every corner at any moment, and the media are able to spread the news of the events and incidents of

the world moment by moment with the development of new information and communication technologies. The media can easily target psychological and mental security, and disturb thoughts by instilling a feeling of insecurity, mistrust, and other negative feelings.

It can be said that any means of mass communication, such as television, radio, newspaper, the Internet, and satellite, which reflect news and information data to the input ports of their audience, is called mass media. However, in terms of the communication dimension, the media are divided into two categories, namely mass media and social media. Mass media present their information through the process of one-way communication, while the people of the society receive the information, but they cannot respond to it. With the development of extensive communication technologies, social media also emerged in society. Therefore, social media brings communities together. People receive information and can express their own response in return, even social media forces users to produce content, and mostly they have anonymous users who post content. It can be said that mass media are officially approved for organizations and many people still trust them, but social media should not be ignored.

Today, mass media have a wide audience in the world, including Iran. This is while the media or social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, also have a large percentage of audience and have achieved extensive growth. Mass and social media are powerful and intelligent identity builders who interpret events, and whose most activities are based on the construction and payment of social facts. Mass media are important sources of knowledge production, collecting and analyzing environmental data in different ways in such a way that they can shape the discourse of their era (10).

In a study, Ebrahimi and Banazadeh Bay (2011) stated that the use of mass media had a significant effect on social trust and influenced the positive and negative attitudes of people toward various issues. They also mentioned that attitudes formed the foundation of trust (11). Avery (2009), in his research titled "The influence of the news media on political trust", which was conducted in America, reported that the positive or negative effect of news media on political trust depended on both news sources (e.g., television or

newspapers) and the people's current level of trust on the political system (12). In this regard, Heyerdahl et al. (2021) also evaluated the motivation of the French Red Cross health volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, the researchers found that volunteering motivation may not only be influenced by the relationships between volunteers on the one hand, and their service recipients and the organizational structures of the Red Cross on the other, but also the social-political interpretations published about the pandemic of the COVID-19, wider than the scope of the health field, could affect volunteering motivation (13).

The media have an undeniable role in society, and one of the areas in which mass and social media have a great role and importance is during a crisis and in crisis management, which is not something that can be considered insignificant and trivial (14). The Red Crescent Society, as one of the institutions responding to crises caused by natural disasters and unexpected events, should move towards establishing effective and continuous communication with the media in crises and events because this would create community trust in this organization and lead to an increase in public morale and control over the crisis.

Considering the status of the Red Crescent Society, it is obvious that it occupies a significant share of mass and social media news, especially when unexpected events occur, and has special importance in the media. One of the crisis management tools is communication and information management, and we can say with certainty that one of the causes of crisis escalation is the lack of a crisis communication plan. Before, during, and after the occurrence of a crisis, crisis management should consider the adoption of some measures in its agenda regarding communication with and information to people, groups, and officials of relevant institutions, develop plans in this regard, and implement them according to the different conditions of the crisis (14).

At the time of disasters and accidents, the first moments are shocking, during which people are shocked and chaos occurs in society, which is the most important issue in public opinion control (15). Aminizadeh et al. (2016) studied the role of citizen volunteers in responding to accidents and disasters, and they stated that volunteers became active during times of crisis (16).

Moreover, Whittaker et al. (2015), in a pilot

study about accidents and disasters, have reported that the activities of emergency or urgent volunteers are most likely to happen in response to accidents and immediately after emergency and crisis situations, especially when citizens think that the needs of people injured in an accident are not provided by official organizations and most volunteer groups only stay at the scene of an accident or disaster for a short time, usually a few hours or a day (17). Therefore, it seems that this indicates the reaction of people to the news coverage and emotions caused by the events during the crisis. Informing the Red Crescent Society and the crisis management headquarters in time regarding possible risks, as well as news coverage and the way and extent of helping people, are highly important.

Izadi Yazdanabadi et al. (2015) conducted research titled "Prioritizing the media functions for effective pre-disaster management phase by using analytical hierarchy process" and showed that the media could play a significant role in pre-crisis management (18). In this regard, Salavatian (2016) has conducted research entitled "Designing a comprehensive model of the role of local and national radio and television in Iran's natural hazards management" and designed a model that at the time of natural disasters, local and national media had the four functions of education and culturalization, informing and establishing communication, monitoring and demanding, and attracting public participation and creating national solidarity. With the help of this model, local and national networks could manage natural disasters in an integrated way while interacting effectively with each other (19).

Anari (2019), in a study entitled "Investigating the relationship between national media and disaster management according to the news network staff" found that when crises occurred, informing and communicating with the audience played an effective role in managing and controlling political, social, and security crises, as well as those caused by unexpected events and natural disasters. Therefore, according to the obtained results, they stated that there was a significant relationship between the national media and the crisis management of natural disasters (20). Furthermore, Mousavi Dolatabadi (2020), in research entitled "The role of television in introducing Ardebil province capacities for natural disaster relief" reported that the Sabalan

network, as the main media of Ardabil province, with its high coverage, could be effective through the roles of informing, monitoring and controlling, highlighting, mobilizing facilities, following up, and training while introducing the capacities of Ardabil province to provide relief in natural disasters and strengthening the existing relief situation (21).

With the expansion of mass and social media in Iran, we are witnessing the emergence of celebrities in different strata of society. Rojek considers media to be the main characteristic of celebrity culture and believes that celebrities cannot be created without media mediation (22). Celebrities are mainly movie actors, comedians, singers, musicians, athletes, and artists. Sternheimer defines a celebrity as someone who is seen, noticed, and known by a significant part of the public (23). After more than half a century after the formation of celebrity culture in Iran, currently, Iranian celebrities are present on almost all social platforms, from billboards and commercials to election campaigns and charitable or humanitarian activities, and they are welcomed by the general public (24).

Endorsing famous people who have attracted the attention of the public in various aspects of advertising programs can be considered highly successful visual symbols that directly or indirectly affect opinions and behavioral beliefs (25). The main purpose of endorsing in advertising is to exert proper effectiveness and increase audience attention. According to Zhang and Au-yeung, advertising with endorsing celebrities has four main advantages, namely quick prominence, quick communication, quick shortcut, and quick transfer (26). Therefore, the Red Crescent Society, with the help of celebrities and mass and social media can achieve its goals in mass education and collecting people's aid in accidents and disasters.

Pourkarimi (2015) conducted research to present the mass education model of the Red Crescent Society and found that mass education had deficiencies in terms of organization, rules and regulations, structure, and process. Furthermore, the researcher took some steps to present a mass education model based on components such as needs assessment, design, implementation, evaluation, and motivational mechanisms in two modes of face-to-face and non-face-to-face (27). Kouchakzadeh et al.

(2018), in research aimed at investigating the position of celebrities as a product of the media and a role model for young people and teenagers, stated that teenagers were more influenced by celebrities than others due to their age and found that nowadays the media reflected these characters in such attractions as visual appeal, excitement, and fun for teenagers and young people (28).

Ejtehadi and Kashafinia (2019) conducted research in the form of a sociological survey of the audience of celebrity culture on Persian Instagram. The research findings indicated that there was an inverse relationship between orientation to religion and the dependent variable (inclination to celebrity culture) and a direct relationship between the two variables of orientation to media and consumerism and the dependent variable (24). In this regard, Dehsofiyani (2019) conducted a study entitled "The authority of celebrities in social issues with an emphasis on opportunities and threats in cyber space", in which he investigated the role and influence of celebrities in public and social issues (29).

The Red Crescent Society has extensive functions at the community level due to its inherent, fundamentally difficult, and dangerous mission; therefore, it has numerous sub-branches that include a wide range of medical, health, relief, educational, and cultural services. The Youth Organization is one of the sub-branch organizations of the Red Crescent Society, which is the oldest organization in the field of youth in the country with a life of more than 75 years; in other words, it is considered to be the entry point for volunteers to the Red Crescent Society. The age range of volunteer members in this organization is between 5 and 35 years old (children, teenagers, and young adults). Volunteers are an integral part of the Red Crescent in response to disasters.

Voluntary movement is considered the most important component of the social capital of the Red Crescent Society. Developing and improving the level of social capital of the Red Crescent Society of the country can play an efficient and effective role in the management and control of internal and external crises and increase the efficiency of this organization in responding to disasters. As a result, it should provide a suitable opportunity for the presence and participation of members from all sections of society and pay

more attention to the opportunities, threats, weaknesses, and strengths of its communication with its audience created with the emergence and expansion of the concept of strategic management in communication issues. A more prominent need is felt in this organization than in other ones to pay attention to future studies regarding the use of communication tools and ways for a service and relief organization, considering the reliance on volunteer forces and public participation and assistance. Therefore, this research tool took a fresh look at the role of the media, both mass and social media, in the development of the social capital of the Red Crescent Society.

### Methods

The present mixed-method research was conducted based on the explanatory sequential design. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to achieve the goal of the research. In the qualitative part of the research, the statistical population was made up of executive managers, experts, and scholars (with at least 10 years of executive and scientific work experience in the Red Crescent Society). Sampling was carried out using a purposeful and snowball method and continued until reaching theoretical saturation. In this part of the research tool, a semi-structured interview, which is suitable for qualitative research in terms of flexibility and depth, was performed. After conducting the interview, the data analysis indicated that no new data was added to the previous data because a high percentage of the data extracted from the last interviews were repetitive. Therefore, after conducting 21 interviews and reaching theoretical saturation, the interviews ended.

In this research, thematic analysis (TA) was used for data analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the clustering methods that focuses on identifying the semantic pattern in a data set. This analysis involves the process of identifying patterns or themes in qualitative data. The advantage of this method of analysis is its flexible theoretical approach that allows for the creation of rich and complex data despite being simple. This method follows a six-step process, namely becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up. ATLAS.ti software (version 9) was used to perform coding steps accurately and create networks appropriately in



this research.

In the quantitative section, the nature of the study was applied, and in terms of the research environment, it was a field study. The statistical population of this research consisted of people in the age range of 18-35 years, who had voluntarily cooperated with the Red Crescent Society on a regular basis and were recognized and worked as volunteer members of the Youth Organization of the Iranian Red Crescent Society. Considering the geographical dispersion of the Youth Organization of the Iranian Red Crescent Society in the country and according to the announcement of this organization about the membership of 30,000 young individuals in the volunteer membership system, the stratified random sampling method was chosen for this research.

The researcher prepared a researcher-made questionnaire, the content validity of which was confirmed by 7 professors and experts on the research topic. Due to the health conditions and the pandemic of COVID-19 in the country, the questionnaire was sent as an online link to all the members of the Youth Organization. The statistical sample for this research consisted of 2,815 individuals who were selected from the

volunteer members of the Red Crescent Society in 31 provinces of the country. They were finally analyzed using the frequency and comparison of raw statistical data. All statistical operations were performed using SPSS software (version 26). The application of these methods made it possible to theorize and explain the role of mass and social media in the development of the social capital of the Red Crescent Society. Therefore, the use of statistical methods can be aimed at increasing the level of applied knowledge in the field of social capital by examining the effective role of the media and taking advantage of it to improve the quality of the charitable and relief missions of the Red Crescent and increase organizational productivity.

### Findings

Descriptive information related to the statistical population of the research is presented in Table 1. The findings show that in the quantitative part of the study, 63.8% of the studied sample were men and 36.2% were women, with a mean age of  $33 \pm 0.986$  years. Moreover, subjects with a bachelor's degree accounted for the largest portion with 41%.

**Table 1.** Frequency of demographic characteristics of the statistical population

Demographic characteristics		Quantitative part of research		Qualitative part of research	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	1796	63.8	12	57.14
	Female	1019	36.2	9	42.86
Educational level	Diploma or below	404	14.4	0	0
	Associate degree	619	22.0	0	0
	Bachelor's degree	1154	41.0	6	28.57
	Master's degree	637	22.6	10	47.62
	PhD	0	0	5	23.81
Age (years)	<20	216	7.7	0	0
	20-25	414	14.7	0	0
	25-30	447	15.9	0	0
	30-35	1738	61.7	0	0
	35-45	0	0	4	19.04
	45-55	0	0	12	57.14
	≥55	0	0	5	23.80

In the qualitative part of the research, the findings demonstrated that 57.14% of the studied sample were men and 42.86% were women. It is noteworthy that the majority of statistical samples, 47.62%, possessed a master's degree. The statistical population in this section was mainly 35 years and above. It is clear from the gender distribution of the research samples that men made up the vast majority of the

statistical population in this study.

Table 2 summarizes the history of voluntary service in the Red Crescent Society by the population of the quantitative section. According to statistical data in Table 2, the volunteer members of the Red Crescent with a history of membership and providing voluntary services for more than five years accounted for the highest frequency of 41.4%.

Table 3 gives information about the method and manner of getting to know and becoming a

member of the people responding to the questionnaire.

**Table 2.** Frequency of the history of voluntary service in the Red Crescent Society by the population of the quantitative section

History of voluntary service in the Red Crescent Society (years)	Frequency	%
<1	668	23.7
1-3	583	20.7
3-5	399	14.2
>5	1165	41.4
Total	2815	100

**Table 3.** Frequency of the way of getting to know and joining the Red Crescent Society in statistical population of the quantitative section

	Category	Frequency	%
Way of getting to know and joining the Red Crescent Society	School and university of study	840	29.84
	Public call	1014	36.02
	Cultural and educational activities	804	28.56
	Sport activities	157	5.57
Way of becoming acknowledged and aware of the activities of the Red Crescent Society	Information sites on the Internet	187	6.64
	Information pages and channels in cyberspace	1589	56.45
	Radio	992	35.23
	Newspapers and press	47	1.67

The information shows that the most common way of membership of the volunteers was the public call with 36%, whereas the least common one was sports activities of the Red Crescent Society with 19.8%. Becoming a member through the school and university of study and cultural and educational activities of the Red Crescent Society was responsible for almost the same percentage. Furthermore, the last part of Table 3 shows the way of information, awareness, and familiarity of people about the programs and activities of the Red Crescent Society; accordingly, the most frequent way of information was through social channels and pages in virtual space with 56.45%. Finally, the analytical results of the quantitative part will be mentioned in the discussion and conclusion sections.

Regarding the explanation of the role of mass and social media in the development of the social capital of the Red Crescent Society, the researcher interviewed and asked open-ended questions from the managers and experts of that population, while at the same time, he used the TA method to present subscales, and for greater coherence and better analysis and interpretation

of abstract concepts, presented three major categories that included news and information, mass education, and accreditation. The process of TA and coding of data started simultaneously with the collection of data extracted from the theoretical principles and background, and then the first interview was initiated and continued until interviewing 21 individuals.

Table 4 tabulates the initial coding of the data. at this stage, 48 initial codes were obtained, and the corresponding subscales were presented using the TA method and the classification of the initial codes. Then, 12 sub-scales or sub-themes were obtained that included public relations, publishing news, safety warnings, guiding public opinion, international aspect, self-relief education, enrichment of free time, public learning, motivation of volunteering, social trust, advertising, and endorsing. After extracting the aforementioned concepts and subscales, for greater coherence and better analysis and interpretation of abstract concepts, the main patterns or main themes were presented in three major categories, namely news and information, mass education, and accreditation. The results of this process are provided in Table 5.

**Table 4.** Primary coding of the thematic analysis method in the qualitative section according to the explanation of the role of mass media

News coverage	Mass education	National and global influence	Organizational goals and missions
Existence of legal status	Transparency	Acts of altruism	Overseas social networks
Extensive operational plans	Publication of accurate news	People's participation	Volunteer youth members and rescue workers
Organizational spokesperson	Cultural and social programs	Overseas support	Sense of philanthropy and empathy between members
Universality	Information and communications technology	Providing voluntary services	Using the potential and capacities of society
Timely warning and awareness alerts	Equality and social justice	Rejuvenation and identity	Collecting cash and non-cash donations
Public image of affairs	Respect and preserve human dignity	Publication of educational clips	Benefiting from the lessons of the past
Human capital	Use of trained personnel	Public help and cooperation	Public benefit and humanitarian activities
Aid and first aid	Enrichment of free time	Specialized training schools	Guiding public opinion
Social concern	Transfer of experiences	External communications	Non-concentration in a geographic location
Advertising	Global trust	Non-adherence to politics	Non-governmental and non-profit organization
Social participation	Borderless and universality of the organization	Existential motivations of volunteers	Responding to crises and incidents

### Discussion and Conclusion

This section is dedicated to the review of the research results. The findings can provide useful information for the executive and strategic managers of the Red Crescent Society and can be quite effective in strengthening the motivation of researchers and paving the way for future research. The purpose of this research was to explain the role of mass and social media in the development of the social capital of the Iranian Red Crescent Society.

Quantitative part: In the quantitative and statistical part of this research, it was attempted to investigate and identify how volunteer members learned about the Red Crescent Society. The statistical data indicated that the majority of the volunteer members of the Red Crescent Society became familiar with the Red Crescent through advertisements and information in mass media and became members of this community through public calls. Therefore, considering the current hectic and industrial lifestyle, recruiting people as volunteers to perform voluntary services has caused a kind of competition between volunteer-oriented organizations. Meanwhile, the key and

important role of effective communication as a competitive advantage cannot be ignored.

The Red Crescent Society, as the largest humanitarian organization in the country and an organization that expands to the scope of disasters and accidents, continuously attracts volunteers across the country by employing various methods, such as the participation of schools, universities, and urban and rural mosques; implementation of cultural and educational activities; public calls for membership; and holding sports activities and programs. Every society is enriched by the voluntary actions of its people, and philanthropy and humanitarianism have been the point of emphasis for all human societies since ever, and all cultures have a positive opinion towards doing charitable and public benefit activities.

In the past, participation in these activities was mostly done by a face-to-face acquaintance or introduction of a trusted person; however, with the development of communication and information tools, tremendous changes have occurred in technology -related matters. The Red Crescent Society, similar to other organizations, used to send organizational messages to a large audience through mass media, such as radio, TV, press, and



newspapers. Nevertheless, with the development of information technology, another form of communication media emerged, which today is known as social media and uses special features.

Social media, such as YouTube, Facebook,

and Instagram, which are active on the Internet and in virtual space, have revolutionized the world of communication by creating and providing two-way (interactive) communication between the sender and the receiver.

**Table 5.** Results of coding, concepts, and main themes based on interviews and review of previous studies in the qualitative section

Concept (primary code)	Sub-scale	Pattern (main themes)
News coverage		
Publication of authentic news		
Extensive operational plans		
Spokesperson of the organization		
Guiding public opinion		
Organizational goals and missions	Public relations	
Universality	Publishing the news	News and information
Non-dependency on political affairs	Safety warnings	
Timely warning and awareness alerts	Guiding public opinion	
Non-concentration in a geographic location	International aspect	
Non-governmental and non-profit organization		
General aspect of affairs		
Borderless and universality of the organization		
Responding to crises and incidents		
Aid and first aid		
Mass education		
Enrichment of free time		
Equality and social justice		
Specialized training schools	Self-relief training	
Benefiting from the lessons of the past	Enrichment of free time	Mass education
Use of trained personnel	Public learning	
Publication of educational clips		
Transfer of experiences		
Information and Communications Technology		
Overseas social networks		
Clarification		
National and global influence		
Existence of legal status		
Human Capital		
Altruistic acts		
People's participation		
Volunteer youth members and rescue workers		
Using the potential and capacities of society		
Overseas support	Motivation to volunteer	
Humanitarian and public benefit activities	Social trust	
Voluntary service will	Advertising	Accreditation
Social participation	Using the capacity of celebrities to endorse	
Youth oriented and giving identity to young people		
Sense of philanthropy and empathy between members		
Existential motivations of volunteers		
Collection of cash and non-cash donations		
Respect and preserve human dignity		
Global trust		
Public help and cooperation		
Cultural and social programs		
Social concern		

Therefore, in the social communication system, an organization can be successful if it well identifies the means and channels of communication in society and gains a full understanding of how each one works and what their characteristics are. The Red Crescent Society is not and will not be exempt from this rule. Therefore, to increase the recruitment of volunteers and provide relief, cultural, and social programs with a humanitarian and public benefit approach, it should address the perception and awareness of the audience through mass and social media.

The researcher also investigated the mass communication channels through which volunteer members could learn about the programs and activities of the Red Crescent Society and follow this organization. The statistical data showed that the volunteer members in the youth category reported that the most common ways to receive information, news, and advertisements of Red Crescent Society programs were through channels, groups, and social pages in the virtual space, accounting for more than 56%. Following virtual space, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting stood at the second rank, while information sites in the Internet space and the press and newspapers took the third and fourth places with a huge difference.

Over time and with the evolution of technology, the media has undergone enormous changes. Although mass media still exists, it has been replaced by social media in certain areas. With the expansion of the Internet and the ever-increasing growth of social networks, a great leap has occurred in the transmission of messages, and with the access of the audience to the Internet and social media, it is difficult to say that mass media are the most inclusive and accessible media. This means the audience is now able to access the new space with ease. Therefore, in the Red Crescent Society, addressing issues such as attracting and maintaining volunteers and focusing on the communication methods and channels of this organization seems highly important. These findings were in line with those reported in other studies, including Parsamehr *et al.* (2017), Bahremand (2016), Haghdoust (2015), Osterlund (2013), Putnam (1993), Shahani (2017), and Volunteer Association of South Australia (2004) (7, 30-35). In these studies, researchers have emphasized the necessity of forming social

networks and examining the dimensions of various fields of voluntary participation and attraction. In this regard, we can refer to some of the results of previous research.

Bahremand (2016), in research entitled "The role of the Internet in the expansion of charitable activities" investigated the role of technology and the Internet on humanitarian activities and how weird campaigns had helped achieve charitable results. This researcher also examined what activities online charities in other countries are involved with, and in the end, addressed the status of humanitarian help through virtual space in our country (30). Haghdoust (2015) conducted a comparative study on the role of interpersonal and mass communication in donors' tendency to support charitable organizations among benefactors in Tehran. The findings of the research demonstrated that there was a significant relationship between the use of mass media to introduce a charity and its activities and the tendency towards charities (31). Osterlund (2013) has stated that one of the biggest challenges of volunteer organizations is attracting volunteers. The results of the research provide five strategies to facilitate attracting volunteers and report that a specific strategy to attract volunteers is to use up-to-date communication tools (32).

**Qualitative section:** In this section, after interviewing and summarizing the data, the researcher coded the data through TA regarding the explanation of the role of mass and social media in the development of the social capital of the Iranian Red Crescent Society. Having extracted the aforementioned concepts and subscales, for greater coherence and better analysis and interpretation of abstract concepts, main patterns or main themes were presented in three major categories.

According to the results in Table 5, the subscales of public relations, publishing news, safety warnings, guiding public opinion, and international aspect were categorized under the main category of news and information. This finding was in agreement with those reported in studies carried out by Aminizadeh *et al.* (2016), Anari (2019), Avery (2009), Ebrahimi and Banazadeh Bay (2011), Mousavi (2013), Mousavi Dolatabadi (2020), Nejatbakhsh Esfahani and Bagheri (2008), Rashidi *et al.* (2014), Roshandel Arbatani and Salavatian (2010), Salavatian (2016), Salavatian and Mehriyan (2015), Salehpour Yousefi (2017), and Whittaker *et*

al. (2015) (4, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 36-39). In these researches, researchers have addressed the need to reflect news and use the potential of mass and social media to deal with various crises.

Salavatian and Mehriyan (2015), in a research entitled "Functions of mass media during an earthquake: a case study of the performance of NHK radio and television in the 2011 earthquake in Japan", stated that the activation of the automatic warning system of radio and television, interruption of everyday programs, dealing with earthquake and tsunami news, informing about missing people, activating local and regional stations, covering live programs from the scene of the accident, deploying receivers in camps, informing about the daily life of earthquake victims, broadcasting programs for the deaf, and informing foreign residents in Japan and at the international level were among the NHK's actions during the East Japan earthquake and tsunami that showed design, planning, prior preparation, and the presence of the crisis communication management team to minimize earthquake damage (4).

In this regard, it can be mentioned that information is inherently public and quickly finds its way to all elements and strata of society. Every day, news is heard from all over the world about the accidents and disasters that cause numerous death cases or leave many people homeless. In crises and disasters, there is a wide range of audio and video information and data that require timely and effective action for accurate and gradual transmission. The ability to establish proper and regular communication with the audience in the incident command system is one of the requirements. In a crisis, various types of mass and social media are not only the audience of communication but are often the most important ones. The media play a valuable role in providing information or instructions in crisis management. Engaging the media as a partner in emergency planning instead of an obstacle in a crisis means turning a threat into an opportunity that potentially has a positive contribution to crisis management. Therefore, it can be said that one of the crisis management tools is communication management.

The role of the public relations of the organization should also be considered in the crisis communication plan because public relations can organize the process of spreading the

news related to the incident through mass and social media. The data and information of the incident should be transferred to the media from a specific system and an informed and reliable source to prevent chaos and rumors. It is of the utmost importance to consider the method and manner of responding to the media. In this regard, it can be said that one of the most important elements of the crisis communication plan is the appointment of a spokesperson during the crisis.

The spokesperson must have strong public relations, as well as communication and media relations skills. Live interviews, press conferences, and publishing that content in virtual spaces and social networks can be effective ways of presenting organizational messages by the spokesperson. That is because this method would reduce the possibility of montage or censorship of many talks and messages. Considering the importance and sensitivity of the activities of the Red Crescent Society in the national and international arenas and its highly prominent role in providing relief during accidents and disasters, it requires special attention and precision to different dimensions and applications of mass and social media. Today, one of the criteria for measuring internationally the amount of humanitarian, public benefit, and non-political activities in each country is the status of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Society of that country. As a result, it can be stated that a component such as news reflection and timely and appropriate information can be effective in directing public opinion even outside the borders of the country.

According to the results in Table 5, the subscales of self-relief education, the enrichment of free time, and public learning were classified under the main category of mass education. This finding was consistent with those found in studies conducted by Aminizadeh et al. (2016), Fazeli Kebria et al. (2021), Izadi Yazdanabadi et al. (2015), Jahangiri et al. (2010), Mousavi Dolatabadi (2020), Pourkarimi (2015), Rashidi et al. (2014), Roshandel Arbatani and Salavatian (2010), Salavatian (2016), Salavatian and Mehriyan (2015), and Soltani and Haghighi (2016) (2, 4, 6, 16, 18, 19, 21, 27, 37, 38, 40). In these studies, researchers have addressed the necessity of mass education and learning to provide voluntary services in disasters and crises.

In this respect, it can be stated that education is

focused on the development and transfer of skills and knowledge related to performing specific tasks and is designed to transfer information to people. Teaching coping methods during a crisis and disaster is a form of self-defense. Paying attention to this point, on the one hand, will prevent risks from turning into crises, and on the other hand, will reduce human losses. In the Red Crescent Society, mass education refers to teaching rescue and first aid as well as dealing with natural disasters to different sections of society, which is considered one of the most influential methods of preventing and dealing with natural disasters. At the time of disasters and accidents, people are among the first groups that reach the scene of the accident and help the victims; therefore, the lack of knowledge, awareness, and skills causes new problems and disrupts the provision of aid.

Based on the evidence, education is highly valued in the Red Crescent Society, and considering this, it encompasses an incredibly wide and diverse audience in terms of age, gender, occupation, culture, religion, and other characteristics. These trainings should be tailored to the educational needs of the people. Therefore, the realization of the motto of the Red Crescent Society, "a rescuer in every house", requires the cooperation of activists in mass media, media, and social networks. The importance of this issue manifests itself after the occurrence of accidents and disasters, before the dispatch of organized relief forces and volunteers of the Red Crescent Society, when each person can save his family and those around him and prevent further damage and casualties. As a result, it can be stated that a component such as mass education can help the Red Crescent Society approach its organizational goals and missions, and mass and social media facilitate this and are effective in developing the social capital of the country's Red Crescent Society.

According to Table 5, the subscales of motivation to volunteer, social trust, advertising, and endorsing are grouped under the main category of accreditation. This result was in line with those reported in studies conducted by Alavi *et al.* (2020), Avery (2009), Bahremand (2016), Dehsofiyani (2019), Ebrahimi and Banazadeh Bay (2011), Ejtehad and Kashafinia (2019), Emadi *et al.* (2021), Fukuyama (1999), Haghdoust (2015), Haghpahan (2017), Heyerdahl *et al.* (2021),

Kouchakzadeh *et al.* (2018), Mehrabi (2012), Putnam (1993), Rahmati Roudsari and Mazidi (2015), Roshandel Arbatani and Salavatian (2010), Seippel (2006), Sepehrian (2019), Shahani (2017), Soltani and Haghighi (2016), Volunteer Association of South Australia (2004), and Whittaker *et al.* (2015) (6,8, 9, 11- 13, 15, 17, 24, 28-31,33, 35, 38, 41-44). In these studies, researchers have dealt with the necessity of creating social trust and appropriate advertising to promote organizational goodwill and the optimal use of well-known models in society to advance organizational goals.

Haghpahan (2017), in research, examined the sociological influence of celebrities on student reference groups. The results of the mentioned study demonstrated that the audience selectively chose the influence and cast a glance at other membership reference groups in connection with celebrities. Furthermore, they felt a conflict between celebrities and reference groups (*i.e.*, family and school). The highest popularity belonged to celebrities in the fields of art, entertainment, and sports, followed by other popular celebrities (43).

The Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran is among the 10 strongest societies in the world, according to the statements of the high-ranking officials of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The activities of this society in the international arena have expanded significantly in the past years, and it can be said that the Red Crescent Society has been a pioneer in providing cash and non-cash aid as well as dispatching relief forces to help the affected victims in different countries. In general, managers and planners of volunteer-oriented organizations in the country, especially the Red Crescent Society, because of their humanitarian and relief nature, aim to develop social capital among national and international communities. Social trust constitutes one of the important components of social capital. Mass and social media are one of the arms of the social trust of the Red Crescent and play a crucial role in increasing and decreasing social trust.

The Red Crescent Society can optimally take advantage of the charismatic character of sportspeople and movie, comedy, and art celebrities in doing charitable work. It can also take an effective step with the cooperation of the media in collecting cash and non-cash donations

to build community trust and respond to crises caused by accidents and disasters. The Red Crescent Society can encourage people to help by running some central programs with the presence of celebrities and arousing people's emotions. Besides, it can try to achieve its humanitarian goals by advertising and establishing a two-way relationship between the power of the needy and the need of the powerful. In the end, the Red Crescent Society, by improving the level of cooperation and altruism culture in society and with the help of mass media and social network activists and celebrities, will be able to increase the productivity and effectiveness of humanitarian and public benefits programs and activities in society.

Red Crescent Society believes that some training is necessary to raise the awareness of the general public. Everyone will need this necessary training at least once in their life, either by choice or by necessity. Therefore, appropriate recommendations for people in the face of a crisis are considered a help to solve the problem or an effective step to prevent future crises. Mass education can be provided offline and remotely through the media and mainly through extension training. Practical training in the media during a crisis assists people in avoiding danger by simulating what have seen in the media. The findings of this research revealed that the Red Crescent Society should not neglect the effective role of the media. Mass and social media provide an invaluable contribution to the development of the social capital of the Iranian Red Crescent Society.

Mass and social media can support the Red Crescent Society carry out hazardous tasks and potential missions and influence the increase and development of the level of social capital of this volunteer-oriented organization. To this aim, mass and social media can adopt various measures from attracting volunteers to increasing voluntary incentives to maintain them, from gaining the trust of benefactors and the general public to collecting cash and non-cash donations in helping victims of accidents and disasters, from mass education in the phase of preventing accidents and disasters to training and safety warnings during crises and disasters to reduce the level of injuries and damage caused by existing crises and disasters, from appropriate news reflection and information at the international scope to gaining

social trust outside the borders of Iran and boosting the organizational goodwill globally.

### Acknowledgments

The authors consider it necessary to thank all the participants who helped in conducting this research.

### Conflict of Interests

Authors have no conflict of interests.

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