

## Ethical Dimensions of Community-Based Crisis Management

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### Original Article

#### Abstract

**INTRODUCTION:** Ethical principles and objectives are the standard of professional behavior in all circumstances and are of greater importance and sensitivity in incidents and disasters. The aim of the present study was to investigate the ethical dimensions of community-based crisis management.

**METHODS:** In this qualitative-descriptive research, all aid workers of Red Crescent Society (RCS) in Fars province were studied in 2023 and a total of 32 ones was selected through random sampling and participated in a semi-structured interview. After analyzing and coding, the obtained data were checked using Maxqda-2020 in qualitative phase and a researcher-made questionnaire was designed based on the indicators. Then, in the inferential part, the obtained data were analyzed with SPSS-24 software.

**FINDINGS:** The results indicate the achievement of 10 dimensions of human ethics in relief work, including chastity and integrity, sacrifice and selflessness, confidentiality, trustworthiness, patience and forbearance, benevolence, preservation of human dignity, non-negligence, sense of responsibility, and cooperation with a significant coefficient of 0.000.

**CONCLUSION:** According to the results ethical principles are a prerequisite for the performance of aid workers in all crisis situations.

**Keywords:** Ethics; Crisis; Crisis management; Aid workers; Red Crescent Society

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#### Introduction

The probability of natural or man-made incidents and disasters is inevitable and increasing. People always suffer and fear from incidents and disasters. The victims are often unable to defend their rights and boundaries. Disasters lead to the disruption of society's functioning, widespread human, social, economic, and environmental damages, and in many cases, result in loss of human life and also physical, mental, social and spiritual repercussions. The enormous economic damages, extensive environmental destruction and pollution, and increased risk of disease outbreaks are among the other consequences and repercussions of disasters. The fate-determining decisions of government officials must be made swiftly, decisively, and timely in short time periods (1).

Severe stress resulting from circumstances should not overshadow critical and fate-determining decisions; in the vital field of emergency and rescue, officials and caregivers are obligated to make correct, logical decisions and take prompt actions. Red Crescent Society aid workers, due to their vital responsibilities in facing various crises, are more than other groups confronted with ethical issues and ethical decision-making in critical and stress-inducing conditions. Therefore, in addition to performing their job duties correctly and responsibly, they must exhibit ethical behavior and maintain professional conduct (2).

The essence of relief work is providing assistance, aid and help. Man can follow two different paths with his will and brought his manifestation to perfection or deprive himself of

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manifestation by conspiring divine attributes in himself and burying it and instead of drawing closer to God and godliness, it can place this natural tendency in two directions: perfection and imperfection (3).

Those who remain true to their nature and act according to reason use this tendency towards service and benevolence towards others. However, those who deviate from their nature employ this tendency on a path of inhumanity and, instead of bringing good, cause harm and damage to others. Therefore, rescue work can manifest in two different and opposing forms, sometimes as assistance and relief in goodness, and at other times as assistance in evil. Based on this premise and considering the advancements that human societies have made in various aspects to create well-being and comfort for individuals, special attention should be paid to individuals affected by incidents in rescue efforts. Therefore, the expansion of ethical principles and the culture of rescue work emerge as significant concerns.

Social-centered crisis management, as a novel approach in crisis management, is utilized to engage all segments of society and is based on innovative perspectives in the field of risks. Due to its inclusion of social-centered components, it significantly influences reducing vulnerability and, consequently, enhancing and increasing the sustainability of cities. Therefore, identifying the theoretical and practical components of social-centered crisis management and utilizing theoretical frameworks of this approach are effective in reducing the impacts of potential natural hazards at the urban level and enhancing urban sustainability. Social-centered crisis risk management is a process in which communities actively participate in the identification, analysis, implementation, review, and evaluation of crisis risk to reduce vulnerabilities and enhance capacities. This means that people are at the center of decision-making and active implementation of crisis risk management activities. The participation of the majority of vulnerable people in facing crises in this process is essential and supporting and assisting the least vulnerable individuals is also necessary. In this process, national and local governments participate and support the flow (4).

The theory of social-centered crisis risk management relies on a people-centric and development-focused approach. This perspective views crises as a reflection of people's

vulnerabilities and empowers people to identify the causes of vulnerability by changing the political, economic, and social structures of unequal and underdeveloped communities. This process covers prevention, pursuit, preparedness, emergency response, and crisis recovery. In general, it should be noted that social-centered crisis risk management provides a framework for the involvement of people and vulnerable groups in planning and implementing crisis actions parallel to national, provincial, and local institutions (5). In this approach, reducing crisis risk is a goal, and its main strategy is to enhance the capacities and resources of vulnerable social groups and reduce their vulnerability to future crises.

Social work and humanitarian aid, based on human nature, are esteemed practices in every religion, belief system, and community. The importance and virtue of humanitarian aid and social work in Islam are undeniable, to the extent that social work, humanitarian aid, and cooperation are considered among the most important injunctions and duties in Islam (6).

Neglecting or falling short in this duty can lead to deviation from the teachings and boundaries of Islam. Although humanitarian aid, like other necessary duties and obligations, must be carried out within the framework of the relevant ethics, and attention must be paid to its etiquettes and procedures, it is essential to elucidate the ethical principles of humanitarian aid. Therefore, based on an examination of available sources and utilizing information databases, a summary of these principles is presented.

**Chastity and modesty:** Modesty, in its literal sense, means refraining from committing indecencies and, in terminology, it is a particular mental state that leads to composure, dignity in behavior, actions, and dwellings. Therefore, the stronger this state is in a person, the more refined their character will be, and their behavior will be more measured, avoiding what contradicts with personal integrity to a greater extent(7).

**Self-sacrifice and altruism:** One of the most important matters that contribute to the development of an individual's character and prepares them for greatness and nobility is self-sacrifice. A term that translates in Persian as "from selflessness." A selfless person is someone who sacrifices for their family, loved ones, and

community. A humanitarian who constantly provides aid to others in disasters, crises, and hazardous situations often requires selflessness and altruism. Without these thoughts and self-sacrifice, they cannot fulfill their duty of providing assistance effectively (8).

**Confidentiality:** Secrecy is the keeping of secrets and keeping private things that people should not know about (9). Therefore, according to the hadiths that the secret of others is considered a trust in the hands of man, the aid worker is also obligated to keep trust in dealing with the secrets and secrets of the clients.

**Trustworthiness:** It is one of the moral characteristics of man that has a great value and importance. The existence of this word indicates the sacredness and extraordinary merit that lies in the text of trust. This spiritual character is present in the soul of the human soul and the pure helpers of nature, and it is always evident in their speech, behavior, deeds and actions (3).

**Patience and forbearance:** The life of man in this world is filled with strange problems that if he stands up to it and is patient and resists, he will surely win, and if he is impatient and kneel before events, he will never reach the destination. Relief who is constantly faced with unpleasant events and is constantly struggling and on the other hand, sometimes encounters extreme temperament and impatience of the client or those around him because of the special circumstances in which the client is located, must have a high level and patiently deal with his relief duty (10).

**Benevolence:** Benevolence means wanting good for others and in the human-made culture of Islam enjoys a high status. The human being is in the midst of the loss of others. In these cases, although he has fulfilled his duty, the higher order is to fulfill his duty with full compassion. It is a matter of the moral and moral virtues of helping others with compassion and kindness (11).

**Preservation of human dignity:** According to the Quran, human dignity is an important principle of creation and entangled in human nature. Allah (SWT) says: "We have honoured the Children of Adam, and carried them on land and sea, and provided them with good things, and we

have made them a marked favor over many of our creatures." The purpose of this verse is to express the present situation of all human beings regardless of divine dignity and special spiritual proximity and virtue for some people. With this statement, it becomes clear that one of the basic characteristics of the aid worker is the maintenance of the dignity and dignity of the clients (3).

**Not obligation:** Obligation, on the one hand, is not compatible with the sincerity of the aid worker, sincere action is done only for the sake of God and negates any kind of favor to the client and on the other hand, it is incompatible with the sense of duty of the aid worker, because relief is the duty of the aid worker and the right of the patient (3).

**Sense of responsibility:** The legal system of Islamic military is obligatory; responsibility in the language of narrations has always been of great importance (12). Therefore, the sense of responsibility for the clients is considered as one of the basic characteristics of the aid worker, and in the hadiths, aid workers who do not create this sense of responsibility and fail to help others are threatened with humiliation in this world and the hereafter.

**Participation and cooperation:** Since man is inherently a social being and many of his needs are met in society, he is inevitably cooperative and cooperative with other members of society, and his life depends on his social participation with other people. One of the things that increase relief efficiency is the cooperation and participation of aid workers. Forgiveness is a sin, and it is not a sin to be forgiven, but it is not a sin to be forgiven, but it is not a sin to be forgiven for the sins of those who are forgiven and have no right to do so (3).

We can radically and deeply institutionalize the moral culture of crisis management and relief in society when we strengthen its foundations. In a society that reinforces the moral basis of help, the individual will unconsciously try to help others, which sometimes leads to sacrifice and selflessness. We need to put the moral dimensions of it into society. For some people, the concept of morality is different from the concept of authority or the use of force, and sometimes two things are

contradictory, because they believe that morality is in conflict with the authority necessary to resolve social crises. It is noteworthy that the way these critics view authority in crises is based on the use of management methods. Therefore, benefiting from this ethical community-based approach leads to increased resilience and reversibility of the society, therefore, considering the importance of learning these principles, this study sought to investigate the following objectives: 1) Introducing community-based crisis management as an efficient approach in disaster management; 2) Introducing the main dimensions and ethical issues of community-based crisis management.

### Methods

In this qualitative-descriptive study, articles related to the discussion were collected and reviewed by referring to the databases of Google scholar, SID, and Magiran in the first phase. Then, 32 aid workers of the RCS of Fars province were selected and interviewed through semi-structured interview method. Data analysis and coding were performed using Maxqda-2020 and ethical indicators (Table 1) were determined and a researcher-made questionnaire was designed

based on the obtained indicators.

It should be noted that the meaning of aid workers here is the people present at the scenes of disasters or incidents, which include official, contracted and volunteer aid workers, executive directors, managers present at the bases and city managers. The first sample of the questionnaire was investigated for content validity; all the items were examined by four psychologists and 1 psychometer in terms of the degree of concept of the items and whether the questionnaire covers all aspects of ethics. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate validity and number of saturating factors and exploratory factor analysis was used to determine construct validity and number of saturating factors. Also, confirmatory factor analysis was used to investigate the confirmatory structure using Lisrel-8.8 software. In order to standardize the raw scores of these scores by using Jmetrik-4.1.1 software to T-standard scores and percentage rank were converted to the normative table for the total scores of the questionnaire. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaire has been used in other research and its article has been published, then it has been used in this study.

**Table 1.** Components and indicators of ethics in crisis management

Component		Indicators
Preparedness in the face of crisis	Preventive measures	Monitoring of potential crisis areas - Preparing warning reports - Informing people
	Mental-attitudinal preparation	Knowledge
		Participating in disaster prevention training courses/reading related books and articles/ acquiring knowledge through experienced people
	Consciousness	Knowledge of the periodicity of disasters/ Awareness of relief groups in the neighborhood/Awareness of the location of safe spaces in the surrounding areas/ Awareness of institutions related to crisis management/Awareness of the time of accidents that happened in recent years.
		Attitude towards accidents and disasters/Attitude towards the priority of prevention and preparedness
	Operational readiness	Skill
		Skill in performing first aid/ Skill in using emergency equipment
	Practice	Practicing helping and helping family members/ Practicing access to telephones and emergency supplies
		Preparing a list of emergency phone numbers/ Keeping documents and documents in a safe place such as a safe/rescue bag
	logistics	Preparing a list of emergency phone numbers/ Keeping documents and documents in a safe place such as a safe/rescue bag
Preparedness in the face of crisis	Groups and networks	Getting to know the neighborhood people/membership in neighborhood associations and organizations
		Trust in the people of the neighborhood and neighbors/Trust in the city officials and the media
	Trust and solidarity	Trust in the people of the neighborhood and neighbors/Trust in the city officials and the media
		Participating in local meetings and activities/participating in the preparation and implementation of crisis management plans
	Collective action and cooperation	Participating in local meetings and activities/participating in the preparation and implementation of crisis management plans
		Building life/structure (materials)/appearance quality
	Building	Stabilization of furniture and glass/windows
		Stabilization of furniture and glass/windows
	Furniture preparation	Stabilization of furniture and glass/windows
		Stabilization of furniture and glass/windows
Preparedness in the face of crisis	Neighborhood readiness	Distance to open and sheltered space /physical quality and resilience/neighborhood buildings
		Distance to open and sheltered space /physical quality and resilience/neighborhood buildings
	Management measures	Conversation/restraint and patience/property of equipment
		Chastity/ sacrifice/confidentiality/ trustworthiness/ patience/ forbearance /benevolence/ preserving human dignity /non-negligence /sense of responsibility /participation
	First aid etiquette	Chastity/ sacrifice/confidentiality/ trustworthiness/ patience/ forbearance /benevolence/ preserving human dignity /non-negligence /sense of responsibility /participation
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		Chastity/ sacrifice/confidentiality/ trustworthiness/ patience/ forbearance /benevolence/ preserving human dignity /non-negligence /sense of responsibility /participation

## Methods

According to the results, 27 participants (84.37%) were male and 5 (15.62%) female. In terms of education level, 19 (59.37%) respondents had bachelor's degree, 9 (28.12) master's degree and 4 (12.5%) were PhD. In terms of experience, 6 ones (18.75%) had less than 5 years of experience, 21 (65.62) a history of 5-10 years, 5 (15.62) had a history of more than 10 years of experience. Also about 17 persons (53.12%) had first class degree in relief, 8 ones (25%) had second class degree in rescue, 4 persons (12.5%) had the third degree of rescuer and 3 ones (9.37%) had the degree of self-sacrifice (ISAR) (Table 2)

In order to soften the scale of relief ethics

using jMetrik-4.1.1 software, raw scores have been converted to percentage ranks and t-scores with an average of 50 and standard deviation 10, raw scores are not interpretable by themselves and in order to achieve a comparable standard it must be converted to a T-score. The questionnaire is graded in a 5-degree Likert scale (1 to 5), so the extracted factors of the questionnaire have a range due to the number of questions.

In Table 4, percentages and standard t-distribution scores for each of the subjects' raw scores were given in the Relief Ethics Scale.

All indicators have a significant relationship with the crisis management component according to the significance coefficient shown in Table 6.

**Table 2.** Demographic information of research samples

Indicators		Quantity	Percent
Gender	Man	27	84.38
	Female	5	15.62
Education	Bachelor's degree	19	59.37
	Master's degree	9	28.12
	PhD	4	12.5
History	Less than 5 years	6	18.75
	5-10 years	21	65.62
	More than 10 years	5	15.62
Category	Volunteer	26	81.25
	Involuntary	7	21.87
	ISAR	3	9.37
Degree	1st Class Degree of Rescue	17	53.12
	2nd Class Degree of Rescue	8	25
	3rd Class Degree of Rescue	4	12.5

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**Table 3.** The factorial values of the items of the composite reliability questionnaire and average variance were extracted CR=0.84 & AVE=0.62

Operational burden	0.78	0.75	0.70	0.78	0.70	0.74	0.84	0.71	0.62	0.83	0.79	0.75	0.78	0.82	0.80	0.78	0.79	0.82	0.74	0.87
T-value	14.2	16	15.8	16	20.2	15.4	14.2	11.3	15.4	20.2	20.2	17.2	14	21.6	24.8	17.3	20.2	21.6	25.3	21

Note: All factor loadings are significant at the 99%

**Table 4.** Standard scores and percentage rank of the total score of the questionnaire

T	Percentage rank	Raw score	T	Percentage rank	Raw score	T	Percentage rank	Raw score	T	Percentage rank	Raw score
74.73	99.33	83	67.09	95.63	62	52.13	58.44	41	29.17	7.65	20
74.81	99.34	84	69.6	97.5	63	52.7	60.62	42	29.65	10.23	21
74.88	99.36	85	73.5	99.06	64	52.98	61.72	43	30.4	11.25	22
74.96	99.37	86	73.56	99.08	65	53.27	62.81	44	30.98	12.1	23
75.04	99.39	87	73.62	99.09	66	53.94	65.31	45	31.27	12.19	24
75.13	99.4	88	73.68	99.1	67	54.8	68.44	46	31.94	13.65	25
75.21	99.41	89	73.73	99.12	68	55.42	70.63	47	32.2	3.75	26
75.3	99.43	90	73.79	99.13	69	55.7	71.56	48	37.53	10.63	27
75.38	99.44	91	73.85	99.15	70	55.88	72.19	49	39.5	14.69	28
75.47	99.46	92	73.92	99.16	71	56.17	73.13	50	40.53	17.19	29
75.56	99.47	93	73.98	99.18	72	56.65	74.69	51	41.8	20.63	30
75.66	99.49	94	74.4	99.19	73	56.89	75.47	52	42.96	24.06	31
75.76	99.5	95	74.11	99.2	74	57.14	76.25	53	43.64	26.25	32
75.85	99.51	96	74.17	99.22	75	57.45	77.19	54	44.58	29.37	33
75.95	99.53	97	74.24	99.23	76	58.09	79.06	55	46.06	34.69	34
76.06	99.54	98	74.3	99.25	77	59.23	82.19	56	47.22	39.06	35
76.17	99.56	99	74.37	99.26	78	60.23	84.69	57	48.03	42.19	36
76.28	99.57	100	74.44	99.27	79	60.92	86.25	58	48.9	45.63	37
			74.51	99.29	80	61.35	87.19	59	49.69	48.75	38
			74.58	99.3	81	62.3	89.06	60	50.24	50.94	39
			74.66	99.32	82	64.4	92.5	61	51.18	54.69	40

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**Table 5.** Percentage frequency and average responses related to the dimensions, components and indicators of ethics in the stages of crisis management

Level	Indicator	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Preventive measures	Monitoring of the crisis-causing areas	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	5.7	37.1	14.3	31.4
	Preparation of warning reports	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	•	14.3	8.6	53.3
	Informing people	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	8.6	14.3	14.3	53.3
Preparedness in the face of crisis	Mental-attitudinal preparation	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	0.20	8.6	22.9	53.3
	Operational readiness	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	8.6	14.3	17.1	57.1
	Communication readiness and social capital	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	8.6	22.9	25.7	57.1
Management measures	Physical substrate preparation	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	8.6	17.1	22.9	62.9
	Conversation	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	8.6	25.7	31.4	62.9
	Observance of restraint and patience	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	8.6	22.9	31.4	28.6
	Equipment fit	•	•	•	2.9	2.9	8.6	22.9	22.9	28.6
	Chastity and integrity	•	•	•	•	•	•	17.1	14.3	62.9
	Sacrifice and selflessness	•	•	•	•	•	•	0.20	25.7	62.9
	Secrecy	•	•	•	•	•	•	31.4	31.4	28.6
	Bailment	•	•	•	•	•	•	31.4	53.3	28.6
	Patience	•	•	•	•	•	•	22.9	53.3	53.3
Aid worker etiquette	Benevolence	•	•	•	•	•	•	14.3	25.7	57.1
	Preservation of human dignity	•	•	•	•	•	•	25.7	22.9	62.9
	Leave a promise	•	•	•	•	•	•	14.3	31.4	28.6
	Responsibility	•	•	•	•	•	•	23.7	61.8	53.3
	Participation and cooperation	•	•	•	•	0	0	31.4	62.9	57.1

1 means least important &amp; 9 means most important

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**Table 6.** Beta coefficients of ethics indicators at four levels in connection with crisis management

Level	Indicator	Not standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	Statistics T	Sig	Prioritizing indicators
		B	Std.Error	Beta			
Preventive measures	Monitoring of the crisis-causing areas	00.37	0.032	0.099	1.132	0.000	5
	Preparation of warning reports	00.89	0.27	0.237	2.342	0.000	1
	Informing people	0.322	0.124	0.227	2.569	0.000	3
Preparedness in the face of crisis	Mental-attitudinal preparation	0.311	0.098	0.243	3.161	0.000	2
	Operational readiness	0.075	-0.056	0.118	-1.312	0.000	4
	Communication readiness & social capital	0.067	0.094	0.065	0.646	0.000	3
Management measures	Physical substrate preparation	0.395	0.129	0.438	3.154	0.000	1
	Conversation	0.342	0.158	0.287	2.165	0.000	1
	Observance of restraint & patience	0.298	0.114	0.143	-0.768	0.000	3
	Equipment fit	0.434	0.267	0.367	1.546	0.000	2
	Chastity and integrity	0.342	0.158	0.445	2.562	0.000	3
	Sacrifice and selflessness	0.274	0.071	0.231	2.876	0.000	3
	Secrecy	0.047	0.074	0.387	3.879	0.000	1
	Bailment	0.178	0.062	0.187	-1.826	0.000	3
	Patience	0.276	0.121	0.213	0.084	0.000	4
Aid worker etiquette	Benevolence	0.109	0.060	0.257	0.512	0.000	5
	Preservation of human dignity	0.318	0.089	0.326	2.234	0.000	1
	Leave a promise	0.289	0.078	0.056	0.342	0.000	3
	Responsibility	0.432	0.178	0.243	3.154	0.000	1
	Participation & cooperation	0.254	0.119	0.286	2.174	0.000	2

## Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the ethical dimensions of community-based crisis management. The results of the background study and analysis are consistent with the researches 1 to 6.

In explaining the findings of the research, it can be said that disasters are a series of harmful events that have human or nonhuman origin. These events are usually unpredictable or at least cannot be predicted for a long time. Aid workers of RCS, due to their close relationship with human life and death, are faced with moral issues governing the situation of crises more than other groups; hence, they must consider moral and human points in addition to fulfilling the job duties correctly and feeling responsible for it (13).

Critical conditions are conditions that have very little resemblance to normal conditions. One of the main and important components of this study is casualties and injuries and consequently relief care for injured people. In times of crisis, the presence of specialized rescue and rescue teams and other relief groups is required. In times of crisis, two groups of ethical problems are important: first, "ethical responsibilities of aid workers" and "effective resolution of relevant ethical problems" should be considered and researched due to the wide range of ethical issues in crisis and disasters from subject-oriented and problem-oriented methods and approaches (14).

Moral decision making in crisis is one of the major issues of relief ethics in crisis and disasters and has been addressed in some internal studies. Ethical behavior varies in different societies, cultural conditions affect moral decision-making. Developing a framework based on cultural values and ethical principles respected by society is essential for ethical decision making in crisis situations (15). Some writings have addressed moral patterns in crisis and disasters. One of the prominent personalities of the Islamic world with the unique characteristics of Lady Zainab Bint Ali (RA), the establishment of the moral and spiritual nature of the infallibility of creation for the lovers and followers of that heroic and devoted lady and the only scholar of humanity in the most difficult disasters and tribulations and in the time and perilous circumstances of fulfilling the heaviest responsibilities is very inspiring and inspiring. One of the most important aspects of crisis in disasters is the management of information ethics

(16), there is a lot of failure in this area, from the recording of information to its intellectual property, to the operation and publication and disclosure of necessary data, the confidentiality of some information and the protection of the confidentiality of the injured and many other information in the field of information. Some studies have addressed this important issue, and most studies have emphasized the existence of an appropriate information system. Record data is in these cases. The moral and social aspects of the role of mass media in public information and in different stages of crisis management are among the most sensitive issues that require careful ethical analysis and compilation of national and regional guidelines. Sergeant and colleagues have paid for this. Accordingly, all aid workers are obliged to comply with the ethical principles presented in this research in line with their duties; they should not be influenced by personal, group or party interests in performing this duty (17).

In addition, in order to promote and empower community-based crisis risk management, the logic of ethics principles and approaches adopted from it is to create a kind of intelligence in different layers of society, so that by creating a kind of alignment in different layers of the cycle, detection and improvement in society spontaneously and endogenously (18). Hence, for community-based planning, it is to have an appropriate diagnostic framework for selecting and screening the characteristics and cultural issues of local communities in a region (19). Based on the analytical discussions presented in this research, a cultural-ethical program can be designed and implemented for aid workers of RCS.

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## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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