

The Study of Identify Associative Factors to Attract and Communicate Public Volunteer Groups in Red Crescent Society (RCS) in Iran

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Abstract: Background The Red Crescent volunteers' organization has a mission to get use of individuals' participation in its plans and programs in a scientific manner. Hence, investigating the participation rate and possible solutions to increase this rate is an important issue that needs careful consideration. This study surveyed some of the associative factors for attracting and communicating with public volunteer groups in Red Crescent Society (RCS) in Shiraz, Iran. **Material and Method** This is a cross-sectional descriptive study. The statistical population included all registered individuals in RCS from 23/09/2006 to 22/09/2009. The sampling volume was estimated by Morgan table as 500 individuals who were selected using simple randomized sampling. Data was collected through a questionnaire. **Result** The obtained results suggested that there isn't any significant difference between different genders, ages, occupational classes and educational levels for participation rate variable. But, there was a significant difference for the appreciate letter variable. Also it was revealed that friends and families are the best motives for increasing the participation rate. **Conclusion** Consideration and attention through moral encouragements is the best way to increase the participation rate, and participation stability depends on a mutual relation between the organization and volunteers.

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Keywords: Volunteers, Participation, Red Crescent Society (RCS)

Introduction

The RCS is a public NGO with specific objectives from which we can refer to spreading human values; supporting human greatness; preventing and preparing to face events; reducing human pains; improving life style, welfare, human health; and spreading peace and mutual agreement between nations (1). The mission of this organization is to organize public participations in line with Islamic values and international principles of Red Cross society. the scope of this society includes: prevention, mediate and preparation against events, reinforce the national presentation and international communications to improve mutual agreements, international peace, reinforce the adolescents participation in relief activities, improve and develop voluntarily activities, support human health, application research and trainings. Iran RCS's volunteers' organization is one of its most important entities (2). The mission of this entity is to scientifically organize public participation in RCS's plans and programs. In other words, this entity is

responsible for organizing the volunteers in order to achieve the RCS's goals. The Red Crescent and Red Cross societies are based on voluntarily activities globally and it is also mentioned in the ' article of association' of Iran's RCS. The advantages of these societies against other supporting societies is that individuals are not considered just as free labor or financial resources, but also their experiences and skills are considered significantly important (3). In this area (volunteers), the society has also the following missions for increasing the adolescents' participation:

- a) Increasing the quality and quantity of adolescents' corporations.
- b) Developing the inter-organizational co operations with extra-organizational, international, and governmental and nongovernmental societies.
- c) Culturing and spread adolescents' participation in decision makings and efficient activities (2).

Considering the above mentioned issues, this question appears that what is the basis of these voluntarily activities and how it works? There are

several researches in this regard. The research which was performed in Australia (2005) suggested the significant role of voluntarily activities in countries' development (4). In Latin America, the voluntarily activities have created so many economical, social, and political opportunities (5). Studies performed in Japan (2010) showed that there is a significant relation between population aspects, economical-social status and voluntary participation rates (6). Through these researches, the politicians concluded that the voluntarily activities are useful for a healthy and successful government (7). In a recent study in Iran (2009), factors such as encouraging tools, organizational and human relations, labor resource management, participation, and group works were considered as important factors for maintenance and attraction of voluntarily activities (8). The attraction welfare services for voluntarily activities include: number of camps, number of congratulation messages, and number of appreciation letters (8).

Therefore, the aim of this research was to investigate the voluntarily activities and its related factors in RCS of Fars province.

Review of the Related Literature

In the study of Parasti et al. 1990 which investigated the advantages, costs and management of motivation and participation rate in voluntary organizations, the socio-economical exchange theories were used to evaluate the participation in voluntary organizations. In 'Black Booster' project, 381 individuals from 29 voluntary organizations were asked to fill the questionnaire and an interview was made with their managers. They concluded that there is a direct relation between voluntarily activities and individual and social interests (9).

In another study, 'three-stage model of volunteers and service duration', Chaku et al. 2007 have used a three-stage model to evaluate the service duration of volunteers and its effective factors. The organization cooperation questionnaire was used in this research, and about 300 individuals participated in this study which lasted 6 and 12 months. They concluded that volunteers' satisfaction and motivations are important for voluntarily activities and participation rate as well as long term voluntarily activities. They also concluded that behavioral purpose is the most important predictive factor (10).

In the study performed by Gaskin et al. 1997, the factors related to participation in voluntary organizations like Red Crescent were studied. The results of his study suggested that the reasons for participation were as follows: these activities being so interesting (%51), finding new friends (%36), self-satisfaction (%34), having an active life(%29), getting experience (%24), social knowledge (%18),

helping others, and achieving religious values (%18).(11).

Barker (1993) has introduced three efficient factors; namely philanthropy, tool-orientation, and obligation, for participation in voluntary organizations. He found that there is a close relation between tool-orientation and voluntary activities. The reasons for philanthropy are helping others, compassion, detecting poor people, while the reasons for tool-orientation are achieving new experiences and skills, and individual satisfaction, and finally the reasons for obligation are ethics, religion, social cooperation, and political responsibilities (12).

We have little information about the volunteers of Shiraz RedCrescent society and there is no documented information about the participation rate. Therefore, it is needed to gain information about the ways of attracting volunteers because it may lead to increasing the participants. If the participants and their role in RCS are ignored, their continuous participation and cooperation will not be ensured. However, participation is one of the main necessities of this society in order to achieve its goals. Therefore, we need to know the proper ways to increase the participation rate, because it is a potential force which is needed in events. So, the authors decided to perform a comprehensive research in this regard in Shiraz RCS.

As it was mentioned before, this study is intended to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any significant relation between participants' age classifications and participation rate in RCS's activities?
2. Is there any significant relation between participants' gender classifications and participation rate in RCS's activities?
3. Is there any significant relation between participants' occupation and participation rate in RCS's activities?
4. Is there any significant relation between participants' educational level and participation rate in RCS's activities?
5. Is there any significant relation between issued appreciation letters and participation rate in RCS's activities?

Material and Method:

This research is a cross-sectional study and the statistical society includes all individuals who were registered in RCS of Fars province between 23/09/2006 and 22/09/2009. Based on the statistics, 2000 individuals were registered in this period. In accordance with Morgan standard table and under study society, the samples numbers were estimated as 500. The simple random sampling method was used in this research.

The data were gathered using the information

recorded in registration form through questionnaires. An author-made questionnaire was designed for this research including variables such as age, gender, occupation, educational level, received appreciation letters, and participation rate in the Red Crescent Society of Fars province. First, 50 questionnaires were distributed between the participants in order to verify the reliability, and then the reliability was evaluated using Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used for measuring hard assessment items. This test which is the result of Cronbach Alpha coefficient is used to measure the reliability of questionnaires with Likert scale and multi optional answers. Each group of questions with equal options should be tested separately. This questionnaire can be used to evaluate the participation rate. (Cronbach Alpha coefficient: 0.722).

For analyzing the data, first the participation rate was obtained from the questionnaire. The questionnaire included 14 questions ranging from 1 to 4, so the participation rate will be in the range of 14 to 56. So this variable which is the answer variable can be considered as continuous and because of the high number of samples SPSS software was used for data analyses. The applied statistical tests included independent sample t-test, and ANOVA and K2 Test.

Results:

Based on the obtained results, demographics characteristics are presented in table 1.

There were no significant relationship between age classification and participation mean score ($p=0.176$), participants' occupation and participations' mean score ($p=0.469$), between participants' educational level and participations' mean score ($p=0.054$), based on ANOVA test ($p>0.05$). Also T-test did not show significant relationship between mean score of participation and gender classification ($p=0.658$).

About the participation knowledge of RCS activities, 31(6%), 191 (38.7%), 183 (36.8%), 92 (18.5%) of participants had low, medium, high, and very high knowledge, respectively.

Table 4 shows different of RCS activities.

About the motivators, 153 (83%), 2(0.4%), 12 (13%), 236 (58.6%) participants reported religious beliefs, using employment and entertainment options, achieving social fame, and philanthropy factors respectively.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants.

| Variables | Classification | Number | Mean(SD) |
|---------------------|----------------|--------|------------|
| Age classifications | 29-35 | 135 | 33.62(6.6) |
| | 36-50 | 212 | 34.8 (6.7) |
| | Above 51 | 120 | 35 (6.18) |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Gender classifications | Total | 460 | 34.51(6.59) |
| | Male | 228 | 36.17 (6.25) |
| | Female | 81 | 36.53 (6.34) |
| Occupational classifications | Total | 309 | 36.26 (6.28) |
| | Unemployed | 28 | 33.75 (7.21) |
| | Employee | 200 | 34.54 (6.30) |
| | Worker | 22 | 32.40 (6.63) |
| | Householder | 63 | 33.74 (6.71) |
| | Businessman | 38 | 33.65 (6.57) |
| | Other occupations | 109 | 35.05 (6.63) |
| Educational level | Total | 460 | 34.33 (6.52) |
| | Under Diploma | 95 | 34.65 (7.10) |
| | Diploma-Associate of arts | 182 | 35.37 (6.68) |
| | B.S. and above B.S. | 186 | 33.72 (6.10) |
| Total | 463 | 34.56 (6.57) | |

Table 2: The relation between issued appreciation letters and participation rate in RCS's activities

| Number of appreciation letters | Number | Mean(SD) | ANOVA test result |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------------|-------------------|
| 0 | 180 | 30.92(6.13) | P<0.001 |
| 1 | 92 | 33.90 (5.32) | |
| 2-10 | 123 | 37.57 (5.48) | |
| More than 10 | 62 | 40.04 (5.32) | |
| Total | 457 | 34.55 (6.64) | |

Note: There is a direct relation between issued appreciation letters and participation rate.

Table 3: Methods of participants' attraction in RCS

| methods of participation in RCS | Frequency (%) |
|--|---------------|
| Media advertisements | 52 (11%) |
| Friends and family | 216 (47%) |
| Presentation of membership from in work place | 143 (31%) |
| Presentation of form in conferences and general celebrations | 53 (12%) |
| Total | 464 (100%) |

Table 4: Different kinds of participants' activities in RCS of Shiraz city (Fars province)

| Activity | Frequency (%) |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Specialized and technical | 68 (13.7%) |
| Executive | 116 (23.4%) |
| Financial | 209 (42.3%) |
| No activity | 102 (20.6%) |
| Total | 495 |

Discussion:

The first research question of this study asked if there is any significant relation between participants'

age classifications and participation rate in RCS's activities. Using table 1 it was revealed that there is no significant relation between the age and participation rate. The age classification was considered above 29 years because the research participants were registered in adolescent organization. It should be noted that all age groups participation was the same. It can be concluded that age does not have any significant effect on participation rate.

The second question asked if there is any significant relation between participants' gender classifications and participation rate in RCS's activities. As can be seen in table 2, there is no difference between male and female participants. However, it was predicted that male participation is more than females, since men usually participate more in social interactions. So it can be concluded that females' roles should be considered significantly important because of their high rate of participation.

The third question asked if there is any significant relation between participants' occupation and participation rate in RCS's activities.

The obtained results revealed that there is no difference between different occupational groups. Therefore, the participant's job can't be considered as a criterion for measuring the participation rate. In the case the results revealed that any special occupational group has more participation rate, the society had to concentrate its focus more on that special group.

The fourth question asked if there is any significant relation between participants' educational level and participation rate in RCS's activities. The obtained results suggested that this variable also hasn't any significant effect on participation rate because all educational groups had same levels of participation in the society activities. Therefore, all individuals with different educational levels can participate in the society's activities.

The fifth question asked if there is any significant relation between issued appreciation letters and participation rate in RCS's activities. As it can be seen from data, there is a significant difference for this variable. So the more appreciation letters received the more participation rate. Therefore, it can be concluded that the RCS has to pay more attention to spiritual aspects in order to attract more participants. This can be achieved by appreciating participants for different useful activities.

Another important conclusion of this research is that families and friends are the most effective way for attracting the participants in RCS's activities, while media and advertisements seemed to be the least efficient methods (see table 3). Therefore, the RCS can attract participants by the help of its old members, and it has to present membership forms to its members in order to attract their families and friends. Media had

low efficiency in this regard and can be a potential target for future improving plans, and the relation between the society and television, radio, newspaper and other Medias should be reinforced. In Rahnavard research, factors such as holding group sessions, and getting help from participant for decision makings were considered as important factors for improving the participation rate (13).

An important conclusion of this research is related to the different kinds of participants' activities. It was revealed that the most common activities were financial ones, while the technical and specialized ones were the least effective activities (see table 4). As it was mentioned earlier, there is no significant relation between age, gender, educational level, and occupation with participation rate. Another important conclusion of this research is that the knowledge level of participants with RCS's activities ranged from medium to high, and fortunately only a small portion of the participants (%6) had low knowledge level. It was revealed that Philanthropy was the most common motivation for participation. As Chackon(2007) mentioned earlier, the participants' satisfaction is an important factor for participation rate (10). Also in a study carried out in Turkey (2007) altruism, affiliation, and personal improvement were the most important motives of volunteers (14).

Conclusion:

Families and friends are the good ways for attracting participants in RCS's activities, and Philanthropy was the most common motivation for participation. Also it can be concluded that the RCS has to pay more attention to spiritual aspects in order to attract more participants. This can be achieved by appreciating participants for different useful activities. Considering all of these factors could be helpful in attracting and maintaining the volunteers.

Limitation:

Hard access to volunteers due to the change of addresses and telephones or wrong registration data were the limitations of this study.

Conflict of interest: None declared

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6/17/2013