

## Research Paper

# Investigating the Relationship Between Altruism and Social Support With the Resilience of Rescuers



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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Rescuers of the Red Crescent Society experience substantial stress and psychological pressure during disaster relief efforts. Providing individuals with a range of psychological interventions and support is essential to attenuate these challenges and prevent the escalation of psychological distress. One key intervention is enhancing resilience, shaped by various moral virtues. This study explores the relationship between the moral virtues of altruism and social support and resilience.

**Materials and Methods** The methodology employed in this study was descriptive, cross-sectional, and correlational. The research targeted a statistical population of 700 rescue workers associated with the Red Crescent, from which a sample of 150 participants was selected through convenience sampling. Data were gathered utilizing the social support questionnaire created by Vaux et al. This approach facilitates an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of social support within this specific group while also allowing for the examination of potential correlations among relevant variables at a single point in time (1986), the global desirable social behavior scale by Rashtan et al. (1981), and the resilience scale by Connor and Davidson (1971). Data were analyzed using SPSS software, version 26 to determine measures of central tendency, dispersion, and correlations. Additionally, the Pearson correlation test and regression analysis were conducted.

**Results:** The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between social support, altruism, and resilience ( $P < 0.001$ ). Additionally, the stepwise regression analysis results demonstrate that social support and altruism are predictors of resilience. This finding suggests that higher levels of social support and altruistic behavior are associated with increased resilience among the participants. The findings show that diverse workshops and exercises on social support and altruism skills enhance resilience, foster rescuers' cultural and social well-being, and help prevent depression and psychological issues.

### Keywords:

Red Crescent rescue workers, Resilience, Altruism, Social support, Psychological interventions

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Conclusion: The findings of this research hold significant potential for enhancing the resilience of aid workers, which in turn may contribute to improved performance and operational efficiency. By fostering resilience among these individuals, organizations can better equip them to navigate the challenges inherent in their roles, ultimately leading to more effective service delivery in humanitarian efforts.

## Introduction

One of the most important indicators that undergoes changes and is affected by disasters and crises is the solidarity of communities. The solidarity of communities during disasters causes more social cohesion and the creation of social capital, cooperation, trust, and ethics in providing adequate relief to the crisis [1]. The golden rule of ethics is to treat others as you would like to be treated. This principle is common worldwide in many major religions and cultures [2].

In psychology, altruism is categorized under social behavior, encompassing actions that may be intentionally planned or ultimately beneficial to others. The motivations driving such behaviors can vary significantly, with altruism being one prominent motivation. Coined by Auguste Comte, the term “altruism” is derived from the Latin word *alter*, meaning “other.” Altruism is characterized as a voluntary action aimed at enhancing the well-being of others through the investment of time, resources, or effort, without any expectation of direct personal gain and often at a personal cost. This conceptualization underscores the selfless nature of altruistic behavior, positioning it as a fundamental aspect of human social interaction and moral philosophy [3]. It is a behavior that takes place by helping others voluntarily.

Empathy is the primary source of altruism, which leads a person to help and be kind to others [4]. Altruistic behavior is a subset of socially desirable behavior and means intrinsic motivation that motivates voluntary behavior for the benefit of another. These actions are motivated by the concern of others or by the value of principles and behavior internalized and not by the expectation of material, social rewards or escape from punishment [5]. Social support is an accompanying and complementary feature, along with altruism, which can lead to stable emotional well-being, a more positive outlook, increased social cohesion, and social capital creation in disasters.

Social support is the level of love, companionship, and attention from family members, friends, and others [6]. Social support is conceptualized as the information that fosters an individual’s belief in their likability, worthi-

ness, and value within their social circles. It encompasses the affection, assistance, and attention from family members, friends, and others. Furthermore, social support is characterized by a shared network of communication that facilitates reciprocal interactions among individuals, reinforcing feelings of belonging and emotional security. This dynamic interaction underscores the significance of social connections in promoting overall well-being and resilience [5]. Researchers believe that social support prepares people to deal with problems, and, in general, social support from family, friends, and others strengthens positive and adaptive behaviors in a person [7].

Resilience is one of the positive and adaptive behaviors characterized as a process, capability, or outcome associated with effectively adjusting to challenging or threatening circumstances. This concept underscores the importance of an individual’s capacity to navigate adversity and emerge from difficult situations [8]. In recent decades, there has been a significant advancement in the knowledge and understanding of resilience. This evolution reflects a growing interest in examining the factors and mechanisms contributing to individuals’ capacity to adapt and thrive in adversity [3]. The study of resilience began with research focused on poor children [9, 10], then adults with chronic diseases, including patients and their informal caregivers [11], students, school teachers, accident survivors [12], rescuers, and crisis management authorities [3]. Resilience is characterized as “the process of effectively adapting in response to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant stressors, which may include conflicts within family or relationships, serious health issues, as well as challenges arising from the work environment and financial pressures.” This definition underscores the multifaceted nature of resilience and its relevance across various life circumstances [13]. This definition suggests that individuals can “bounce back” in the face of adversity and challenges. Resilience is also regarded as a personality trait that mitigates the negative impacts of adverse experiences while facilitating adaptation. Furthermore, resilience can be perceived as an outcome marked by the absence of functional psychopathology or impairment following a challenging event. This perspective highlights the role of resilience

in fostering psychological well-being and effective coping strategies [7].

Based on what was said, social and individual factors of resilience, social support, and altruism play an important role in the work and lives of individuals and communities and factors involved in crises and accidents. The Red Crescent of the cities and provinces is considered the country's most important relief and rescue center for helping the injured and is responsible for restoring the life and health of the injured.

Rescuers of the Red Crescent Population experience a lot of stress and psychological pressure during disaster relief, and studies indicate a high rate of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) among them [14]. Therefore, it is necessary to have appropriate and coherent plans to deal with the crisis in all dimensions. In general culture, there is a widespread expectation that the organization's design is such that it can cope and be resilient in any crisis [15]. Therefore, the Red Crescent Society's rescuers must have resilience-related characteristics to deal with the stresses of relief work and the consequences of resilience in disasters.

According to the mentioned materials, it can be seen that to achieve the goals and mission of rescuers, they took action based on their specialized skills and abilities in disasters. This study investigated the correlation between altruism, social support, and psychological resilience. The results of this research can guide the creation, improvement, and execution of initiatives aimed at improving the welfare and effectiveness of Red Crescent rescuers. Enhancing these elements among rescuers is essential for maximizing their performance and efficiency in different crisis scenarios.

## Materials and Methods

The method of carrying out this research is descriptive and cross-sectional. The study population comprised all the rescuers of the Red Crescent Society of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, numbering 700 people in 2024. To determine the sample size, the formula recommended by Tabachnik and Fidell [16] was employed, resulting in the selection of 150 participants through a convenience sampling method. The inclusion criteria specified that participants must be between 20 and 40 years old, possess at least a high school diploma and actively work as aid workers. All participants were provided with comprehensive information regarding the research objectives, and assurances were given regarding the confidentiality of their responses. Data analysis was

conducted using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics included calculating statistical indices such as mean and standard deviation, while inferential statistics involved the application of the Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis techniques.

The primary research instrument employed in this study was the multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS) developed by Zimet et al. [17]. This scale subjectively assesses the adequacy of social support experienced by individuals [17]. It is designed to capture perceptions of social support from various sources, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the support available to participants. This scale assesses individuals' perceptions of the adequacy of social support from three distinct sources: Family, friends, and significant others. Specifically, items 3, 4, 8, and 11 evaluate family support; items 6, 7, 9, and 12 assess support from friends, while items 1, 2, 5, and 10 focus on support from other sources. Each subscale has a maximum score of 20 and a minimum score of 4. The MSPSS is highly recommended for its ease of administration and cost-effectiveness [18]. It is a 12-item instrument that assesses an individual's perception of social support from three sources: family, friends, and significant others. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "completely disagree" = 1 to "completely agree" = 5. The studies conducted by Zimet et al. [17], which evaluated the psychometric properties of the MSPSS, demonstrated that this instrument is valid and reliable for assessing perceived social support. Additionally, research by Brower, Emsley, Kidd, Lochner, and Sidat [19], which utilized confirmatory factor analysis to investigate the scale's psychometric attributes, confirmed that the three-factor structure of the MSPSS aligns well with the data. These findings reinforce the MSPSS's utility as a robust measure for understanding perceived social support across various contexts.

Another instrument utilized in this research was the Connor-Davidson resilience scale (CD-RISC) questionnaire, developed by Connor and Davidson. This scale assesses an individual's resilience in adversity [15]. The CD-RISC consists of 25 items aimed at measuring resilience across various components: Competence and personal strength (items 12, 11, 24, 25, 10, 23, 17, 16), trust in personal instincts (items 6, 18, 15, 20; items 7, 19, 14), tolerance of negative emotions (items 1, 4, 5, 2, 8), restraint (items 21, 13, 22), and spirituality (items 9, 3). Responses are scored on a Likert-type scale. The total score is calculated by summing the responses to all items, yielding a score ranging from 0 to 100. A higher

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for the research variables

Variables	Mean±SD	No.
Resilience	82.5± 4.2	150
Social support	65± 3.3	150
Altruism	35± 3.2	150

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total score indicates greater resilience, with a cut-off point of 50; scores above this threshold signify individuals with resilience, where higher scores reflect a stronger intensity of resilience.

The third tool used in this research was an altruistic behavior questionnaire [20]. This questionnaire has 13 items and two dimensions of normal altruism and emergency altruism.

In Ahmadi's research [20], the validity of the questionnaire has been confirmed, and the Cronbach alpha value for the emergency altruism dimension was 0.66, and for the normal altruism dimension was 0.56. Also, the reliability of this questionnaire was found to be 0.71 in the mentioned research.

## Results

The study results are organized into two sections: Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The Mean±SD resilience score was 82.5±4.2, while the Mean±SD score for social support was 65±3.3, and the mean altruism score was 35±3.2 (Table 1).

All subscales and the overall score for social support exhibited a significant positive correlation with resilience (Table 2). Additionally, the findings indicated a

positive significant correlation between altruism and resilience (Table 3).

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the research variables. The Mean±SD values of resilience, social support, and altruism were 82.5±4.2, 65±3.3, and 35±3.2, respectively

As seen in Table 2, all the subscales and the total social support and altruism score significantly positively correlated with resilience. This finding means that as people's social support scores increase, their resilience increases, and with the increase in altruism scores, the resilience of rescue workers increases.

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed a normal distribution, and the regression analysis model can be used. The results of this study are presented in Table 3.

To examine the predictive roles of social support and altruism on resilience, a multiple regression analysis was conducted simultaneously. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.

As seen in Table 4, 19% of the variance of resilience is explained by social support and altruism.

**Table 2.** Correlation between social support (friends, family, other people) and total social support score and altruism with rescuers' resilience

Correlation	Coefficient Variable	Sig.	No.
Friends	0.35	0.0001	150
Family	0.42	0.0001	150
Other people	0.28	0.0001	150
Total social support score	0.43	0.0001	150
Altruism	0.35	0.0001	150

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**Table 3.** Examining the assumptions of normality and multiple collinearities between variables

Correlation	Kolmogorov Smirnov	Sig.
Friends	0.056	0.250
Family	0.036	0.120
Other people	0.063	0.320
Total social support score	0.049	0.126
Altruism	0.072	0.455

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## Discussion

The current study examined the influence of social support and altruism on the resilience of Red Crescent rescue workers. The findings reveal a direct relationship between each component of social support, the overall social support score, and altruism and resilience among these workers. Specifically, as the level of each social support component increases, so does the resilience of the rescuers. This research underscores the significant association between social support and resilience, aligning with Bakker et al. [21] theory. It posits that flexible employees can better recover from challenges and manage job demands through social support. Furthermore, these results are consistent with previous studies indicating that a supportive environment can significantly enhance individuals' ability to recover from stressful situations [22]. This finding aligns with Ozbay et al. [23] and Okojie et al. [24], who determined that organizational support increases resilience during stressful periods. Consequently, resilient individuals require resources, such as social support, to effectively navigate crises. The study conducted by Chi et al. [25] indicates that resilient nurses in the hospital setting can adapt to crises and effectively manage challenges. Specifically, social support networks significantly support the demands of stressful occupations and the ability to recover from setbacks and adversity. In explaining the relationship between fam-

ily support and resilience, it can be said that most aid workers depend on the role and presence of their family in matters such as taking care of them, valuing and respecting them, being praised and praised by the family, and assisting and cooperating with family members. The feeling of intimacy with the family members has been mentioned, and positive support from the family has increased resilience. In explaining the relationship between friends' support and resilience, it is possible to consider things such as being valued and respected by friends, paying attention to the success of rescuers and being encouraged by their friends, the existence of intimate and intense emotional relationships between rescuers and their friends and peers, and partners. They pointed out that in each other's sorrows and joys and helping each other in difficult life and work matters, which has made the Red Crescent relief workers satisfied with their friends, and also based on relationships and support from friends. The relationships between Red Crescent rescuers and their friends, peers, and partners are vital to their well-being. These rescuers support each other through challenges and celebrations, fostering a sense of satisfaction and camaraderie. They can rely on their friends for assistance when faced with tasks that exceed their capabilities. This mutual support not only enhances their ability to cope with difficult situations but also significantly increases their resilience.

**Table 4.** Prediction of resilience based on social support and altruism

Predictor Variables	Criterion Variable	F	P	R	R <sup>2</sup>	B	Coefficient B	t	P
Social support friends	Resilience	41.72	0.0001	44%	19%	22%	35%	6.60	0.001
Other important people						0.24	0.32	5.5	0.001
Family						0.28	0.38	7.1	0.0001
Altruism						-13%	-14%	-2.67	0.008

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Several factors are involved in the study of the relationship between the support of other people and resilience. Moderate attachment to others, being respected by the public, valuing and having a positive view of the rescuers of the [Red Crescent Society](#), being reliable and trustworthy among the people and being the center of attention from others in different places, the timely presence of rescuers in emergency cases, and helping people who want rescue are among the reasons leading to a positive relationship between the support of other people and resilience in [Red Crescent](#) rescuers. In the other part of the research, the results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between altruism and resilience.

The results of this research are in line with the results of Rostami et al. and Naseri et al. [26, 27]. Also, social and altruistic relationships with people in different life environments create opportunities for people to discuss and investigate stressful events, and people can express their feelings and receive and understand each other's feelings and experiences in dealing with the same or similar stressful situations. Use each other positively, and these common experiences can reduce the annoyance of these incidents and enable people to care about their positive aspects and look at their abilities and life issues with a more positive and optimistic view [4].

Examining the specific resilience attributes of disaster responders can offer valuable insights into the preparedness of the disaster workforce. Researchers and managers at the [Red Crescent](#), focused on disaster risk reduction, can utilize the resilience characteristics checklist to identify suitable aid workers and develop disaster preparedness among them. The findings of this study provide researchers and managers with information that can inform the design of screening processes for disaster responders.

## Conclusion

The findings of this research provide a framework for [Red Crescent](#) population managers to optimize the deployment of rescuers during disasters. The research offers insights for developing interventions to enhance rescuer resilience, mitigate psychological distress, and improve performance and productivity in disaster response operations.

## Limitations of the research

This research was conducted on the statistical population of paramedics working in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer

Ahmad Province, and caution should be taken in generalizing the results. Considering that the research tool was a questionnaire, it is possible that the paramedics reported a more favorable situation.

## Ethical Considerations

### Compliance with ethical guidelines

All participants received verbal information about the research and voluntarily participated in it. Participants were assured that all their information would be kept confidential and not documented, respecting their privacy.

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### Authors' contributions

All authors equally contributed to preparing this article.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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