

## Explanation of Executive Model of IRIB News in Crisis Management

Ashraf Sadat Mousavi<sup>1</sup>, Akbar Nasrollahi<sup>2</sup>, Tahmures Shiri<sup>3</sup>

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### Original Article

#### Abstract

**INTRODUCTION:** Due to the vulnerability of the country to various disasters and events, the role of directing public opinion, and the attention of the general public and political elites to Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the present study aimed to obtain and explain an executive model of IRIB news in crisis management and the way of citizens' exposure.

**METHODS:** This study was conducted based on an applied research method in terms of objective, and it is qualitative research using an exploratory approach in terms of method. The statistical population consisted of experts, managers, and professors of media and crisis (Crescent Society and Crisis Management Organization). The data were collected using a semi-structured in-depth interview technique, and a saturation was observed using a targeted sampling and after 25 interviews. In addition, the Strauss method in grounded theory was applied to analyze the data. Moreover, in the process of theory analysis, MAXQDA (version 2020) was applied, and a total of 120 concepts and 20 categories were identified.

**FINDINGS:** Some categories, such as the unprofessional nature of media, unprofessional coverage of news, biased news organization, lack of media independence, public distrust, and tendency toward alternative media, are the requirements for explaining an executive model of news in crisis management, which are axially coded as causal conditions. In addition, appropriate news coverage, information, analytical programs, people's voice, crisis management principles and organization, education and informing, and culturalization, were the seven main categories selected as the main strategies to develop the model.

**CONCLUSION:** Some categories, such as the improvement of media performance, de-escalation instead of crisis-making, rumor prevention, obtainment of public trust, accountability of officials, organizing and mobilizing human forces, social cohesion, increasing resilience, as well as reconstruction and rehabilitation, are of the consequences of using appropriate strategies to explain IRIB news in crisis management.

**Keywords:** Culture; Culturalization; Crisis; Crisis Management; IRIB News.

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#### Introduction

Natural disasters cost the world approximately \$214 billion annually and could cause extensive and severe damage by 2030 (1). In 2019, a total of 396 natural disasters were recorded in the Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), with 11,755 individuals killed, 95 million people injured, and \$103 billion in economic losses worldwide. Asia has accounted for the majority of injuries with 40% of disasters and 45% of deaths. Among these disasters, floods with 43.5% of

deaths are the deadliest type of disaster, followed by extreme temperatures, storms, and drought with 25%, 21.5%, and 31%, respectively (2).

Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) has always been the focus of the audience, and its performance has always been the focus of the general public and the country's political elite due to its influential role among different sections of society and all age groups. It should also be noted that Iran is one of the countries that has constantly been exposed to various political, economic, social,

1- Department of Culture and Communication, Islamic Azad University of Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran

2- Department of Media Management, Islamic Azad University of Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran

3- Department of Sociology, Islamic Azad University of Central Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran

Corresponding author: Akbar Nasrollahi, Email: [akbar.nasrollahi@gmail.com](mailto:akbar.nasrollahi@gmail.com)

and natural hazards; therefore, the role of the media in managing and directing public opinion, in other words, media coherence, is of great importance. This issue is further significant in the official media, including IRIB, because it has the task of leading the country's public opinion, and its performance is always criticized.

Not high numbers of available specialized experts, lack of coverage and information in times of crisis, accountability of officials, as well as ignorance and low public knowledge about dealing with the forthcoming crises, are among the ahead challenges in crisis management.

In the case of news and information, some problems can be pointed out being encountered more or less, such as the lack of transparency in the news received in the media, especially radio, and sometimes not obeying honesty and ethical principles in broadcasting news, particularly in times of crisis (e.g., COVID-19 and denial of its emergence at its beginning days and successive reports to prove that it was not an important problem, even when people were worried about themselves, family and the state of society), late news, and making some expediency. It is noteworthy that the dissemination of news in crisis circumstances should be in such a way that the crisis not to be considered simple as if nothing had happened, nor should it be magnified to such an extent that it causes confusion and anxiety among the people.

The national media should consider the boundary between information and apprehension resulting from the mass dissemination of news and essentially the engineering of public opinion following the principles to protect the rights of the audience and protect the psychological safety of public opinion. It should also regard that the speed of news release in social networks is faster than that in media in most cases. The extensive use of new communication technologies, the attraction of mass audiences, and participation in the process of shaping public opinion, as well as its important role in informing, streaming, directing public opinion, de-escalation, reducing public concern, public education, public mobilization, raising awareness, and national cohesion must be considered applied as solutions.

In the role of national media (IRIB) in culture and the general public's exposure to crises and natural disasters, some forthcoming challenges are momentarily telecommunication of events and

news, culturalization and the manifestation of culture in the society, public information, attention to the importance and role of people in providing security, health and relief, culturalization in the context of crisis for the cohesion of society, accurate informing based on the needs of society, stimulating thoughts and feelings, as well as changing individual and social behaviors, developing further preparedness in communities and rapid alert, reflecting and reinforcing, as well as silencing the opinions, directing public opinion, as well as streaming and facilitating the information.

Therefore, media planning is one of the essential measures in managing natural disasters in the country. Nowadays, the dangers that arise in society cannot be appropriately managed and controlled without the help of the mass media. The media, as the undisputed tool and pillar of the modern world, plays an important role in informing, streaming, and directing public opinion in all periods, especially in times of crisis. A special work, if successful, can significantly contribute to overcoming the crisis and informing the public mind to deal with the state of society.

The historical course of the country's natural disasters indicates that many natural crises occur every year, which imposes many financial and life losses. Iran is located in a dangerous area in terms of specific climatic and geographical conditions. Therefore, it is essential to have strong crisis management in the country and interact with the media as an important tool. It should be noted that nowadays, mass media have become an inseparable part of crises (3).

Public opinion undergoes many changes in crises, which can become significantly complex and uncontrollable if not appropriately managed. According to the fact that the task of the media is to "raise awareness", "inform correctly", and "reflect facts" in times of crisis and non-crisis, and also emphasizing that providing timely, correct, and accurate information reduces public concern and leads to audience's precise action at the proper moments, it is noteworthy that the role of media in crisis management is significant and can certainly contribute to controlling and inhibiting the crisis as strong arms of executors.

Meanwhile, the role of citizens in dealing with crises is important so that it can be considered a determining factor in the success or failure of a society in crisis management. The optimal use of

the potential of the human forces in times of crisis requires the necessary preparations before the crisis. Recruitment, training, and organization are the main elements of preparedness (4).

In general, addressing and covering the crises by the media is normal because crises are significant sources of news. According to experimental analyzes, more than 25% of all media coverage is about media coverage of natural, political, technological, and other crises. The media is usually the only reliable source of information for individuals during crises and natural disasters (3).

In the current circumstances, if the aim is to have useful and practical changes in the field of crisis management and public awareness and the national media (radio) not lose its efficiency, meaningfulness, and continuity, the relevant organizations must make purposeful and significant changes; otherwise, they would lose their functional potentials and capacities.

Nowadays, people get information through the media, and the activity of the media in the field of education, information, entertainment, and advertisement, has made them a central factor in shaping public opinion and an integral part of social life. On the other hand, crises are an inseparable part of human life, a type of interactive model can be considered between them (5), and the media, crisis, and society can be regarded as three interrelated elements. Therefore, crisis managers can use media tools in the best logical way to introduce crises and tragic events, form a committee as one of the main arms of the management staff, establish direct communication with people, create a refreshing psychological atmosphere for the continuation of life between people, as well as provide people timely, honestly, and correctly information (6).

The impact of the media on the crisis is significant when public opinion is out of balance, as well as mental safety, and subsequently, social security is disrupted. The public opinion refers to a set of thoughts and opinions that people believe in. Moreover, public opinion cannot be seen and measured; however, its power and influence are understandable. Therefore, public opinion can be considered a kind of judgment, evaluation, or expression of opinion of social groups or the public about an event considered by the decision-making system as a social phenomenon; although, it may not be correct. They are among the most effective

tools in shaping the public opinion of the media (especially the press, radio, television, and the Internet). By all means, the degree of effectiveness of each of them is different, while many factors, such as age, gender, education, geographical area, as well as economic and social status affect this diversity. In the modern world, manipulating public opinion is one of the main tactics of media managers, and media owners use this tool to guide and control public opinion towards their desired changes. Whenever or wherever media executives take control of public opinion with the means and techniques of producing a message, they can create critical conditions at that time or place (7).

The way of using the media in times of crisis can inhibit the crisis at the internal, national, and international levels and lead to the domination of the people and officials over the unsettled situations. The media can have a significant effect on controlling or creating and increasing the crisis. Moreover, the crisis management centers can use the media appropriately and with a modified logic, which is possible only when all available facilities and equipment are used in planning (8).

The media shapes experiences in a mediated society, and this phenomenon can be understood in terms of components, such as being visualized, communicationized, media canonization, as well as visual and semantic rotation. In the broad sense of the word, and not just radio and television, the media today are the producers of meanings. They encourage or denigrate a mode of action, make meanings, and determine who is suffering and who is not. In general, the medialized situation is full of positive and negative elements, similar to all other phenomena. In the meantime, the most important being performed is to reproduce and intensify the news, which has made it possible for people to move more than before. Moreover, the medialized space moves the society through the intensification of grief and suffering of others (9).

The issue of crisis is one of the cases in which the role of culture and culturalization can be seen and highlighted in its absence. Since we encounter the presence of the people before, during, and after the occurrence of accidents and crises, the spontaneous presence and participation of the people in the issue of preparation for dealing with the crisis, relief, or after the occurrence, the reconstruction and normalization of conditions require appropriate public education and culturalization to institutionalize these training and

information. Educated people are always prepared for crises, accidents, and sudden events; moreover, they can react properly, save their and others' lives in the event of an accident, and rush to aid the injured people.

Culture and risk perception are inherently related and intertwined. Many studies show a possible connection between culture and perception of disaster risk, accident management, and communication-related to accident risk. Methodological approaches are different, ranging from quantitative and empirical research to qualitative case studies in social and intercultural psychology, sociology, and social anthropology. However, definitions of culture in these studies rarely intersect and relate further to nationality, ethnicity, gender, as well as economic, social, and geographical factors, compared to cultural aspects. For instance, living in a disaster-prone area with previous experiences of accidents impacts understanding the risk of accidents; however, it is not directly interpreted as increasing the danger and predictable risks in the future (10).

The role of the media in culture, especially in Iran, in the face of natural disasters and crises at various stages, led the researcher to develop solutions for radio management by developing an executive model of radio news in crisis management. The media seems to be a powerful and efficient tool in managing the country's crisis; however, this ability is not used properly. As an official media, IRIB is necessary to take a codified and clear path in the face of natural disasters and crises, perhaps to play a role in reducing the damage and problems that follow, and for the media to keep an eye on crises and disasters. In times of crisis and disaster, the media are the watchful eyes of the community, which must provide the maximum necessary information to the people in the shortest possible time by providing accurate, documented, and up-to-date information. Accordingly, a better understanding of the information and communication gap between the media and the people in crises and the current state of IRIB indicate the lack of a proper news executive model in crisis management. Therefore, this study aimed to find an appropriate model for IRIB news in crisis management.

One of the most important measures is the need to produce appropriate content to better understand natural disasters to achieve the principles and programs for scientific management, prediction,

prevention, control, inhibition, and reduction of disaster damage in the country, as well as public education. Moreover, one of the main issues of this study was the identification of significant indicators affecting the performance of IRIB news in crisis management.

## Methods

This applied research employed an exploratory approach to collect qualitative information and used the Strauss method in the grounded theory to analyze data. The semi-structured in-depth interview technique was used as the main method of collecting data in the form of open and general questions. In this study, the researcher has faced saturation after 25 interviews with managers and experts in the field of crisis in the Red Crescent Society and the Crisis Management Organization, as well as experts and university professors in the field of media. The samples were selected through targeted and snowball methods. The grounded data based on coding was used to analyze the research data and the interview and textual data were coded. Information coding consists of three stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The codes that referred to a common theme formed groupings and concepts, and categories were determined by comparing and classifying during open coding by referring to the initial codes extracted from the interviews (coding of key points). In general, a total of 120 concepts and 20 categories were identified, and MAXQDA software (version 2020) was applied to organize the qualitative data. In the axial coding stage, a paradigm pattern was used to connect the main categories to the subcategories to identify the causal conditions, axial phenomena, contextual factors, intervening variables, strategies, and consequences that are the components of axial coding. Following that, the categories were related to each other, and the relevant system was presented through selective coding based on the identified pattern of relationship between categories and subcategories in open and axial coding.

## Findings

According to the descriptive findings of the demographic section of the questionnaire, the respondents included 9 females and 16 males. The highest frequency was in the age group of 35-45 years old. Regarding the academic degrees, 4, 11, and 10 respondents were undergraduates, masters,

and Ph.D., respectively. Furthermore, a total of 8, 11, and 6 respondents were middle managers, senior experts, and senior managers of the organization, respectively. The work experience of the majority of respondents was more than 5 and less than 25 years.

In the secondary coding and through comparing the concepts, similar and common items are placed in the form of a unit category after extracting the concepts. Therefore, the mass of data (codes-concepts) was reduced to a certain and limited number of major categories.

### ***Variables of Explaining a Suitable Executive Model for IRIB News in Crisis Management***

In-depth and semi-structured interviews with professors, managers, and experts of crisis and media were conducted and analyzed to achieve data that meets the objectives of the research. Interview and textual data were coded in the process of theory analysis, and information coding consisted of three steps, including open coding,

axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding was conducted in initial and secondary coding. Initial coding can be conducted by line-by-line, phrase-by-phrase, or paragraph-by-paragraph coding of data with a concept or code attached to each of them. In secondary coding, by comparing the concepts, similar and common items were placed in the form of a unit category. Therefore, the mass of data (codes-concepts) was reduced to a certain and limited number of major categories.

### ***Open Coding***

The authors extracted specific concepts and codes in open coding by reviewing and studying the interviews conducted line-by-line. For this purpose, MAXQDA (version 2020) was used, and in the first stage, 120 different codes or concepts were extracted, which were repeated 1,175 times in the interviews. Table 1 indicates similar and common concepts with the alternative unit category and the main categories of research with axial coding method.

**Table 1.** Categorization of code

|     | <b>Categories</b>                                        | <b>Related Concepts</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.  | Non-professional nature of the media                     | lack of knowledge/ unprofessional reporters/unprofessional performance/being traditional/political nature                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 2.  | Non-professional news coverage                           | lack of transparency/surprising/delay in information/weakness of reporting the crisis/competition and haste for breaking news/contradictory and vague news/fake news and rumors/forgetting the crisis                                                                                                                                               |
| 3.  | Biased organization of news                              | selective coverage/censorship in crisis/political orientations/factional and ideological perspective/magnification or minimization/exaggeration in news/checkered movement                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 4.  | Lack of media independence                               | authoritarianism and exclusivism/one-sided speaker/media dependence on the government                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 5.  | People's distrust and tendency towards alternative media | people's distrust/people's tendency towards alternative media                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 6.  | Knowledge and recognition of a crisis                    | correct definition and understanding of the crisis/understanding and supporting managers/observance of professional principles/research and development                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 7.  | Strategic preparedness                                   | skills enhancement/improvement in preparation/creation of a crisis system or program                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 8.  | Experts                                                  | crisis psychologists/professional and independent journalists/acquisition of experts/crisis experts/professionals/professional spokesmen/popular presenters and celebrities                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 9.  | Control of public opinion                                | energizing/calming/avoiding indifference/avoiding public incitement/directing public opinion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 10. | Infrastructures                                          | provision and development of facilities/specialized channel or studio related to crisis /provincial channels                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 11. | Interactive media communication                          | executive arm/interactive approach/media interaction with other departments/free broadcast of red crescent training                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 12. | Training of experts                                      | training of journalists and professional experts/training of IRIB staff                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 13. | Principles of policy-making                              | leading council/health policy-making council/ working group of crisis management                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 14. | Appropriate news coverage                                | live news coverage from the scene/complete and ethical coverage/transparency/justice and fairness/avoidance of factionalism/impartiality/honesty/responsibility/acting on time/up-to-date news/speed of publication/moment-by-moment news/accuracy/reliable source/accurate statistics and information/proper content production/media verification |

Table 1. Continued

|     |                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15. | Information                                         | alerts/awareness/unbiased information/subtitles/cyberspace activities                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 16. | Analytical programs                                 | review/interview with experts/analytics/documentation to transfer experiences<br>connection between people and                                                                                                                                      |
| 17. | Voice of people                                     | officials/demanding/advocacy/monitoring/challenging/transparency/finding the<br>truth/receiving feedback/identifying the needs of the audience/paying attention to the<br>victims/pursuing the crisis/citizen reporter/broadcasting popular support |
| 18. | Principles and organization of<br>crisis management | use of experiences/cooperation with the crisis management organization/crisis and<br>disaster management/crisis management organization/news agencies in crisis                                                                                     |
| 19. | Education and awareness                             | education and awareness/first aid education/continuing education/pre-, during and post-<br>crisis education                                                                                                                                         |
| 20. | Culturalization                                     | safety culture/culturalization                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

### Axial Coding

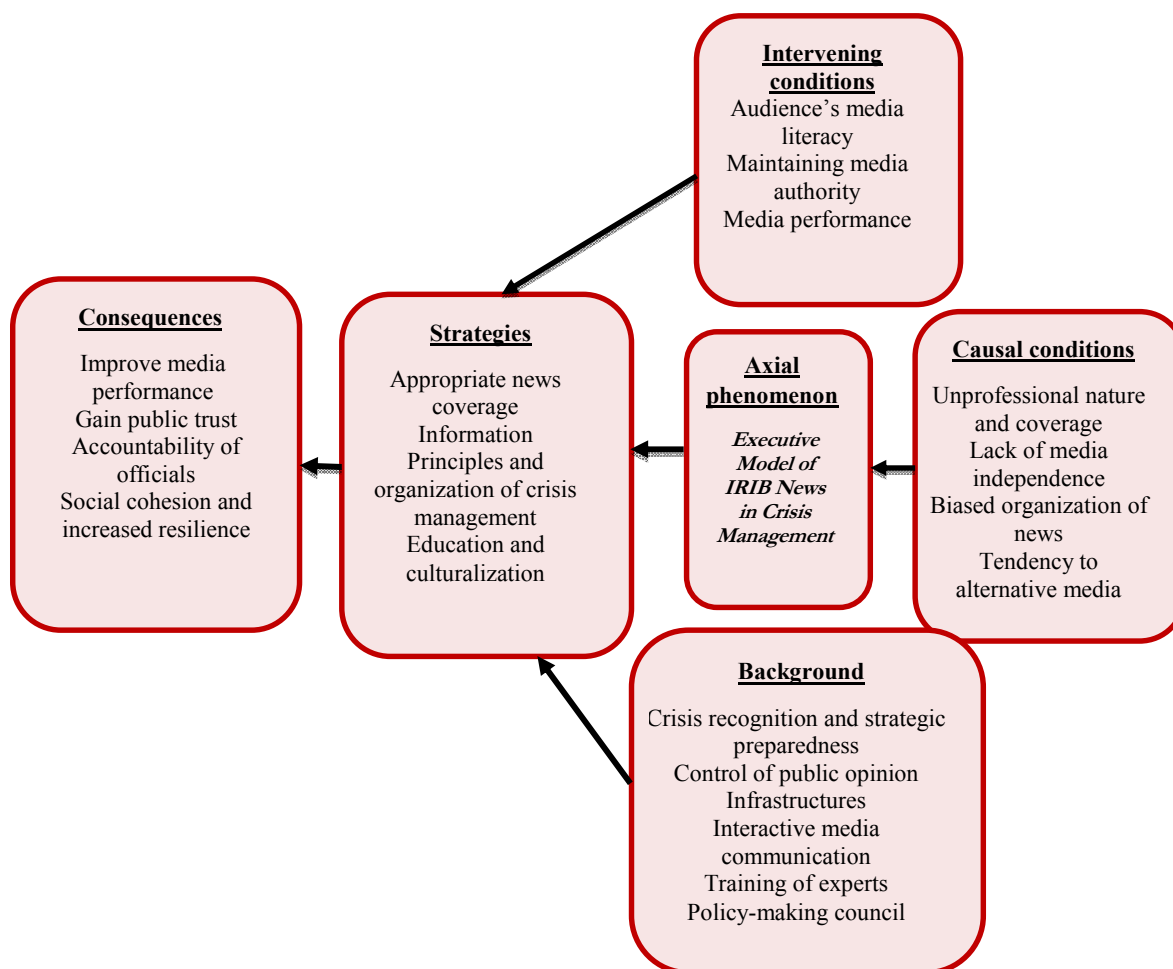
In axial coding, the researcher selects a category from the open coding stage, places it at the center of the studied process as a central phenomenon or category, and then relates it to other categories, including "causal conditions", "strategies", "causal and intervening conditions",

and "consequences". This step involves drawing a diagram called a "coding pattern."

According to the main subject of the interview and the research subject, the central phenomenon of this study is the appropriate executive model of IRIB news in crisis management. In the meantime, causal conditions are some categories that affect. (Table 2)

Table 2. Frequency of components

|                        | Variables                                                | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Causal conditions      | Non-professional news coverage                           | 67        | 27.46      |
|                        | Non-professional nature of media                         | 66        | 27.05      |
|                        | Biased organization of news                              | 62        | 25.41      |
|                        | People's distrust and tendency towards alternative media | 30        | 12.30      |
|                        | Lack of media independence                               | 19        | 7.79       |
| Intervening conditions | Review and change of media behavior                      | 20        | 40.00      |
|                        | Independence and freedom of media                        | 14        | 28.00      |
|                        | Maintaining the authority                                | 8         | 16.00      |
|                        | Audience's media literacy                                | 4         | 8.00       |
|                        | Unity of procedure                                       | 4         | 8.00       |
| Background             | Control of public opinion                                | 57        | 18.87      |
|                        | Experts                                                  | 56        | 18.54      |
|                        | Knowledge and recognition of a crisis                    | 45        | 14.90      |
|                        | Strategic preparedness                                   | 41        | 13.58      |
|                        | Infrastructures                                          | 38        | 12.58      |
|                        | Interactive media communication                          | 29        | 9.60       |
|                        | Training of experts                                      | 25        | 8.28       |
|                        | Principles of policy-making                              | 11        | 3.64       |
|                        |                                                          |           |            |
| Strategies             | Appropriate news coverage                                | 171       | 33.46      |
|                        | Voice of people                                          | 89        | 17.42      |
|                        | Education and awareness                                  | 89        | 17.42      |
|                        | Principles and organization of crisis management         | 49        | 9.59       |
|                        | Analytical programs                                      | 40        | 7.83       |
|                        | Information                                              | 39        | 7.63       |
|                        | Culturalization                                          | 34        | 6.65       |
|                        |                                                          |           |            |
| Consequences           | Gaining public trust                                     | 30        | 33.71      |
|                        | Social cohesion                                          | 17        | 19.10      |
|                        | De-escalation instead of crisis-making                   | 9         | 10.11      |
|                        | Avoiding rumors                                          | 8         | 8.99       |
|                        | Reconstruction and rehabilitation                        | 7         | 7.87       |
|                        | Accountability of officials                              | 6         | 6.74       |
|                        | Organizing and mobilizing forces                         | 5         | 5.62       |
|                        | Increasing resilience                                    | 4         | 4.49       |
|                        | Improving media performance                              | 3         | 3.37       |
|                        |                                                          |           |            |



**Figure 1.** Explaining model of the executive model of IRIB news in crisis management

the central phenomenon. In this investigation, unprofessional news coverage, unprofessional nature of media, biased news organization, public distrust and tendency to alternative media, as well as lack of media independence, are among the infrastructures and requirements of the IRIB executive model in crisis management and are axially coded in causal conditions.

### Selective Coding

Selective coding is the process of integrating and improving categories. At this coding stage, the grounded data theorist writes a theory of the relationships between the categories in the axial coding model. The process of integrating and improving theory into selective coding is performed through some techniques, such as storyline writing that connects categories. In a storyline, the researcher examines how specific factors affect the phenomenon and lead to the use of specific strategies with certain outputs. (Figure 1)

### Discussion and Conclusion

Due to the special conditions of the country, a total of 31 cases out of 40 different types visible in natural disasters have been identified in Iran (11), which is due to the geographical location and topographic characteristics of Iran and the high vulnerability of structural and non-structural aspects of society, which leads to countless deaths, injuries, and its adverse consequences (12).

The media have significant functions in various dimensions of the crisis, and their participation is essential for the optimal management of the crisis (13). Nowadays, people receive their required information through the media. Moreover, media activity in education, information, entertainment, and advertising has made them a central factor in shaping public opinion and an integral part of social life. On the other hand, crises are inseparable parts of human life; hence, a kind of interactive model can be considered between them (14).

Media independence and freedom, audience's media literacy, unity of procedure, maintaining authority, as well as reviewing and changing the behavior of media are five categories that affect intervening factors on strategies. Moreover, some categories such as knowledge of the crisis, strategic preparedness, experts, control of public opinion, infrastructures, interactive media communication, training of experts, and principles of policy-making, as contextual categories, affect the codification of the executive model of IRIB news in crisis management.

Consequences are the outputs of employing appropriate strategies in explaining the executive model of IRIB news in crisis management. In this study, some categories such as improving media performance, de-escalation instead of crisis making, preventing rumors, gaining public trust, accountability of officials, organizing and mobilizing human forces, social cohesion, increasing resilience, as well as reconstruction and rehabilitation, are among the consequences of using appropriate strategies in explaining executive model of IRIB news in crisis management. Most of the interviewees mentioned them as well in expressing their experiences. Moreover, most of the elites acknowledged that the reference role of national media far from a specific political orientation, accuracy and transparency of news, appropriate and professional coverage of news in times of crisis, and the media's cooperation with crisis management until the end of a crisis, leads to increase of the public trust and reliance as well as creation of a suitable culturalization for all stages of before, during, and after the crisis.

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### Conflict of Interests

Authors declared no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the present study.

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