

The role of the Saudi Red Crescent in spreading the culture of first aid among school and university students

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Abstract:

This research aims to examine the role of the Saudi Red Crescent in spreading the culture of first aid among school and university students, as one of the most important national entities contributing to enhancing health awareness and developing skills for properly handling emergency situations before the arrival of specialized medical teams. The study relied on the descriptive analytical approach, where data was collected using a field questionnaire consisting of four main axes that addressed public awareness of first aid, the role of the Saudi Red Crescent, participation and implementation, and the impact of awareness campaigns. The tool was applied to a sample of (250) participants from school and university students in different regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the aim of measuring the level of awareness and the effectiveness of the programs provided. The results showed that participants' awareness was high, and that most of them recognized the importance of learning first aid skills and their ability to apply them in simple situations. The results also showed that Saudi Red Crescent programs played a prominent role in instilling a culture of first aid through media campaigns and training courses targeting young people in particular. Participants also indicated their desire to increase practical training opportunities within educational institutions. In light of the findings, the study recommended the inclusion of first aid programs in school curricula and the strengthening of partnerships between the Red Crescent and educational institutions to ensure the sustainable dissemination of this culture. This would contribute to building a more aware society capable of handling emergency situations with confidence and responsibility.

Keywords: Saudi Red Crescent, first aid, health awareness, school and university students, awareness programs, field training, first aid culture, community, health education.

Introduction

The Saudi Red Crescent Authority plays a vital and important role in promoting community health and safety. This role is not limited to providing emergency ambulance services only, but rather extends to becoming a fundamental partner in building a society prepared and capable of responding to emergency crises. At the forefront of these efforts is spreading the culture of first aid, a skill no less important than any basic academic subject, especially among the youth segment of school and university students. Targeting this broad age group represents a strategic future investment, as the student transforms from a mere recipient of education into a confident and influential first aider in his environment, whether inside the educational campus or in his family and social surroundings. The school and university environment is a hotbed for many minor injuries and accidents, or even larger emergencies that require immediate intervention. Here, the role of the Saudi Red Crescent emerges through the implementation of specialized training programs designed to suit each age group and the educational level of students. These programs

,for example, the Prince Naif First Aid Program, do not limit themselves to providing theoretical knowledge but rather focus intensively on practical training and realistic simulation, starting from dealing with simple bleeding and fainting, all the way to saving the lives of those suffering from suffocation or cardiac arrest through Cardiopulmonary resuscitation and use of an automated external defibrillator^{1,9}

Discussion

The Saudi Red Crescent aims to integrate this emergency culture as an integral part of students' daily awareness, creating a generation of rescuers capable of making the right decisions in critical seconds before specialized ambulance teams arrive. This training's impact is not limited to immediate incidents, but rather instills in students the values of responsibility, assistance, and altruism. It also significantly and tangibly reduces the rate of complications resulting from incorrect intervention or delayed ambulance services. Through effective partnerships with the Ministry of Education and academic institutions, the Saudi Red Crescent organizes awareness workshops, exhibitions, and periodic field campaigns in schools and universities, using the latest educational technologies and resources to ensure the message is delivered in the most effective and attractive ways for young people. This emphasizes that first aid is an essential life skill that directly contributes to achieving the Kingdom's Vision 2030 to build a vibrant and healthy society^{2,5}

- The importance of spreading the culture of first aid in society

Disseminating first aid culture is a fundamental pillar of health and community security and represents a direct investment in saving lives and reducing disabilities. The importance of this culture is highlighted in transforming individuals from passive witnesses to accidents into effective first responders who possess the skills and knowledge necessary to provide immediate care in the critical moments following an injury or accident and before the arrival of emergency medical services. The most prominent importance is in saving lives. In cases such as cardiac arrest, suffocation or severe bleeding, only the speed of intervention determines the fate of the victim. For example, immediate cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) can triple the chances of survival of a cardiac arrest victim. While a one-minute delay reduces the chance of survival by approximately 10%, the presence of a trained person at the scene means a vital first line of defense, against sudden death³

In addition, first aid plays a role in preventing injuries from getting worse. Knowing how to properly stabilize a fracture or stop bleeding prevents serious complications such as infections or permanent nerve and tissue damage. Proper handling of burns or wounds ensures a faster and less costly recovery for the healthcare system. It also effectively reassures and calms injured patients. Confident and professional primary care reduces panic, anxiety, and fear, helping stabilize their psychological and physical condition until paramedics arrive. Disseminating this culture among members of society, from schools and universities to workplaces and neighborhoods, contributes to the creation of a resilient and prepared society that can withstand health and environmental shocks. It also helps reduce the burden on hospitals and emergency departments. Prompt and effective intervention reduces the need for intensive medical care in some cases. It also promotes social responsibility and community participation, instilling values of cooperation, altruism, and the ability to help others, which positively impacts the fabric of society as a whole, making it more cohesive and safe. Therefore, first aid is a universal language of humanitarian assistance that everyone must master^{8,9}

- Saudi Red Crescent's efforts to raise awareness among students

The Saudi Red Crescent Authority's efforts to raise awareness and train students, whether in schools or universities, represent a national strategy aimed at building a society that is self-sufficient in dealing with emergency situations. These efforts are not limited to basic training, but rather represent an integrated system aimed at instilling a culture of first aid and making it an essential part of students' daily awareness. These programs are implemented through effective and ongoing partnerships with the Ministry of

Education and various academic institutions to ensure that the message reaches the largest possible number of young people. One of the most prominent of these efforts is the Prince Naif First Aid Program, a pioneering initiative directly targeting students. This program not only provides theoretical knowledge on how to deal with various injuries, but also focuses intensively on practical training and applied skills, using advanced simulations to train students on vital procedures such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation(CPR) and choking relief techniques. The goal is to provide students with the confidence to intervene quickly and effectively in critical situations. Special emphasis is also placed on how to use automated external defibrillators(AEDs), a device that has become essential in public places and educational facilities^{6,8}

In addition, the Saudi Red Crescent organizes awareness campaigns and field exhibitions within school and university campuses. These activities use visual and interactive materials that attract young people and offer short, intensive workshops that address topics such as dealing with sports injuries, first aid for poisoning incidents, or the necessary procedures in the event of fainting. The Red Crescent also engages students through student volunteer programs, where groups of them are qualified to become ambassadors for first aid within their schools and universities, which ensures the sustainability of the awareness process and the transfer of knowledge from one student to another. These ongoing efforts ultimately aim to transform each student into a link in the rescue chain. The rescue chain is able to save lives and effectively reduce complications before the arrival of specialized ambulance teams^{8,1}

- The impact of awareness programs on the level of knowledge of first aid

Awareness and training programs on first aid constitute a fundamental pillar in raising the level of awareness and competence among individuals in society. The primary impact of these programs is to transform ignorance and fear of dealing with emergency situations into confidence and systematic knowledge. The information provided in these courses, whether theoretical or practical, provides participants with the scientific foundations for recognizing various injuries, from cardiac arrest and suffocation to wounds and fractures. This cognitive shift ensures that initial intervention is sound and based on medical principles, rather than relying on rumors or incorrect practices that may worsen the patient's condition. The knowledge of first aid acquired through these programs goes beyond providing the individual with information, but also significantly impacts the quality and speed of response in critical situations. Intensive practical training in vital skills such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation(CPR) and choking relief techniques creates what is known as muscle memory in the trainee. This memory enables the individual to act naturally and correctly in the event of an accident without wasting time. In any emergency, every second counts, and the ability to initiate first aid procedures within the first minutes before the arrival of specialized teams significantly increases the likelihood of survival and reduces the occurrence of permanent complications or long-term disabilities^{2,10}

In addition, awareness programs play an important preventative role. When individuals acquire detailed knowledge of first aid, they become more aware of the causes of accidents and the risks surrounding them at home, work, or on the road. This cognitive awareness motivates individuals to take better precautionary measures to avoid injuries in the first place. For example, knowing how to deal with electrical shocks makes people more cautious when handling electrical appliances. First aid training often includes general safety principles and an assessment of the accident site, helping protect the first responder and others in the area. This transforms society from a consumer of knowledge to a producer of safety. These programs also positively impact the psychological and social health of participants. When individuals possess first aid skills, they increase their self-confidence in their ability to help others, eliminating the sense of helplessness many feel when witnessing an accident. Disseminating this culture also instills values of social responsibility and altruism, which enhances social cohesion and makes individuals more willing to contribute to supporting each other during crises. Therefore, the cumulative effect of these programs is the building of a healthy, resilient community with self-efficacy in managing minor emergencies and responding initially to major disasters^{11,7}

- The relationship between practical training and increased efficiency among students

The relationship between practical training and increased student efficiency is a direct relationship especially in a field that requires quick and accurate decision-making, such as first aid. Theoretical training provides the cognitive foundation and guidelines, but it is not sufficient to transform this information into applied skills. This is where practical training comes in, representing the true bridge between theoretical understanding and actual, practical application. This is achieved through the use of advanced simulation manikins and real first aid equipment, such as mock CPRs and defibrillators. Students can practice procedures repeatedly, which leads to the consolidation of knowledge in muscle and mental memory. This repetition ensures that the response in real situations is quick and free from hesitation resulting from remembering theoretical steps. One of the most important effects of practical training is its ability to build self-confidence in students and reduce the fear and stress associated with dealing with emergency situations. In a safe and controlled environment during training, students are able to make mistakes and correct them under the supervision of trainers. This experience breaks the barrier of fear of touching the injured person or making the decision to intervene. When students practice CPR techniques or how to stop bleeding on a manikin, they go beyond the theoretical aspect and enter a phase of psychological and physical preparation, and this confidence The acquired knowledge enables him to transform from a mere witness to an accident into a confident first responder capable of effectively managing the situation in critical moments, which greatly increases his efficiency^{9,1}

Effective practical training is not limited to repetition of skills but includes simulations of various real-life scenarios, such as traffic accidents, choking in a restaurant, or a fall at school. These simulations enable students to develop critical thinking and decision-making skills under pressure. In a simulation scenario, the student is not required to apply a single skill, but rather is asked to assess the situation as a whole, ensure safety, summon assistance, and then provide appropriate first aid in the correct order of priorities. This ability to fully manage the scene is the essence of first aid competence. Therefore, practical training moves the student from the knowledge stage To the point of being able to do the right thing at the right time and place, ensuring that their intervention is effective and minimizes potential harm^{6,4}

- The role of educational curricula in promoting first aid culture

Integrating first aid into educational curricula is a strategic and necessary step to create a conscious and responsible generation capable of responding immediately to emergencies. The role of educational curricula in this field is vital and multifaceted. It is not limited to adding information, but extends to consolidating basic life skills. The primary role of educational curricula is to transform first aid from a secondary subject into a basic life skill taught alongside other academic subjects such as science and mathematics. When this knowledge and information are included in the official curriculum, they gain greater importance and credibility in the eyes of both the student and the educational institution, as the curricula work to provide students with an organized cognitive framework on how to assess the situation and deal with common injuries such as wounds, burns, fractures, and life-saving basics such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation. This methodological framework ensures that knowledge is comprehensive up-to-date, and distributed in a gradual manner that is appropriate to the age group and cognitive level of students. The role of curricula is not limited to providing students with theoretical information only, but must include a mandatory practical and applied component. This is achieved by designing study units that encourage practical training and simulation using educational toys and equipment. When the curriculum allocates time for practical exercises, such as applying bandages or practicing CPR steps, students can build muscle memory and gain the confidence needed to take the correct action under pressure. Therefore, an effective curriculum is one that connects the classroom and the training room and ensures that first aid tests assess skill, not just knowledge^{3,8}

In addition to teaching first aid procedures, educational curricula play a significant role in enhancing preventative awareness among students. Students who learn how to deal with accidents become more aware of the causes of danger in their environment, whether at home or at school. Through the curriculum students are taught the principles of public safety and how to avoid accidents in the first place, which

,reduces the rate of injuries. Integrating first aid into the curriculum instills values such as responsibility, altruism, and immediate assistance, transforming students into safety ambassadors capable of caring for themselves and others, thus enhancing community cohesion and resilience in the face of emergencies. Therefore, including first aid in the curriculum ensures the sustainability of training and standardization of its standards across the country, rather than relying on seasonal awareness campaigns. First aid education becomes an ongoing process embedded in the student's educational journey, ensuring that all students receive the same quality and reliable information and that they graduate with this life skill, regardless of their background or school. This standardization also makes it easier for relevant entities, such as the Saudi Red Crescent, to focus on supporting and training educational cadres, rather than starting from scratch with each group of students^{5,9}

- Contribution of student trainees in spreading awareness among their peers

The student trainees contribute to the knowledge transfer methodology, as they are able to communicate with their colleagues in simple and understandable language, far from formal academic or complex first aid. This direct interaction makes information about first aid more attractive and acceptable among young people. When a student explains to a colleague the importance of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the impact is stronger and more convincing, breaking the barrier of fear and hesitation about intervening in emergency situations. This mutual knowledge transfer ensures that the message reaches groups that may not be reached by formal training programs. Student trainees play a vital role in organizing and managing awareness activities within their schools and universities, as they are part of the student body. This makes it easier for them to obtain support for implementing practical initiatives, such as holding mini-workshops during recess or after school, organizing open awareness days on university campuses, or creating educational corners that present the basics of dealing with common injuries. These activities are often interactive and realistic as they use the simulation skills they have learned, transforming theoretical information into a tangible experience that encourages others to learn and participate^{8,7}

The first aid trainee becomes a positive role model and a source of inspiration for their peers. When a student sees a colleague possess a life-saving skill or act confidently and calmly in an emergency, even a simulated one, they are naturally motivated to enroll in the training and acquire the same skill. This positive role model contributes to fostering a culture of social responsibility and voluntary assistance among young people, transforming first aid from a mere educational obligation to a required societal culture. Thus student trainees ensure the continuity of awareness and the expansion of the base of first aiders within the educational community^{2,1}

Study Field

The scope of this study is volunteer work and first aid, focusing on the role of the Saudi Red Crescent in spreading the culture of first aid among school and university students. This field falls within the interests of humanities, social sciences, and health studies, which seek to enhance community awareness and develop the life skills necessary to deal with emergency situations. This study also falls within the framework of research efforts aimed at supporting national programs in the field of health education and community prevention^{8,3}

Methodology Search And Its Tools

The study relied on the descriptive analytical approach, as it is the most appropriate for the nature of the objectives aimed at describing the phenomenon under study and analyzing it in the field through the opinions of the sample members. A questionnaire was designed to collect data from students in schools and universities to determine their level of first aid awareness and culture, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the Saudi Red Crescent's programs in spreading this culture. The data were statistically analyzed using appropriate statistical analysis software to extract and interpret the results.^{6,1}

Research Tools

The researcher relied on the questionnaire as the primary means of collecting data, due to its ease of application and accuracy in measuring trends and attitudes. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale to measure participants' level of agreement with the statements included. Its items were divided into four main axes:

General awareness of first aid,

The role of the Saudi Red Crescent,

Participation and implementation,

The impact of awareness campaigns.

The validity and reliability of the tool were verified before applying it to the primary sample to ensure the reliability of the results.

Analysis

Table (1): Frequency Distribution of Demographic Data (N = 250)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	44.0
	Female	140	56.0
Age Group	Under 18	65	26.0
	18–25	150	60.0
	Above 25	35	14.0
Educational Level	School Student	70	28.0
	University Student	150	60.0
	Employee	25	10.0
	Other	5	2.0
Region	Riyadh	90	36.0
	Makkah	80	32.0
	Eastern Province	55	22.0
	Other	25	10.0
Attended First Aid Course	Yes	105	42.0
	No	145	58.0

The table shows that the majority of participants were young people (18–25 years old) and university students, which reflects this group's interest in the research topic. It also appears that only 42% have received first aid training, highlighting the need to increase training and awareness programmes.

Table (2): Descriptive Statistics for Axis 1 – General Awareness of First Aid (N = 250)

Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
1. I have general knowledge about the basics of first aid.	4.12	0.85	2	High
2. I believe that learning first aid is essential for everyone.	4.56	0.62	1	Very High
3. I can handle minor cases such as cuts or burns.	3.98	0.91	3	High
4. I follow awareness materials about first aid.	3.85	0.96	4	Moderate

The results indicate a high level of general awareness among participants of the importance of learning first aid, with a high overall average (4.13), reflecting a positive perception of the value of first aid culture in society.

Table (3): Descriptive Statistics for Axis 2 – Role of the Saudi Red Crescent (N = 250)

Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
5. The SRCA plays an active role in spreading awareness.	4.24	0.79	1	High
6. SRCA programs target students effectively.	4.08	0.84	3	High
7. SRCA awareness methods are engaging and clear.	4.15	0.82	2	High
8. SRCA cooperates with educational institutions.	3.97	0.88	4	High

The results show that participants view the Saudi Red Crescent as an effective entity in spreading awareness of first aid, with an overall average of (4.11), which reflects the student community's confidence in the Authority's efforts.

Table (4): Descriptive Statistics for Axis 3 – Participation and Application (N = 250)

Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
9. I have participated in an SRCA event.	3.42	1.05	4	Moderate
10. I feel motivated to join first aid courses.	4.33	0.73	1	High
11. I can apply what I learned in real life.	4.08	0.81	2	High
12. First aid training should be mandatory in education.	4.20	0.78	3	High

The table shows that students' motivation to participate in training courses is high, although the actual level of participation is average, indicating a high level of awareness that needs to be supported by greater practical opportunities.

Table (5): Descriptive Statistics for Axis 4 – Impact of SRCA Campaigns (N = 250)

Item	Mean	SD	Rank	Level
13. SRCA campaigns increased my awareness.	4.26	0.75	1	High
14. I noticed improved awareness among peers.	4.09	0.81	2	High
15. SRCA efforts reduce fear during emergencies.	4.02	0.86	3	High

The results show that the Red Crescent campaigns had a tangible impact in enhancing awareness and confidence during emergency situations, with a high overall average (4.12), indicating the success of the media and training programmes.

Table (6): Overall Means and Standard Deviations by Axis (N = 250)

Axis	Mean	SD	Level	Rank
General Awareness	4.13	0.84	High	2
Role of SRCA	4.11	0.83	High	3
Participation & Application	4.01	0.84	High	4
Impact of Campaigns	4.12	0.81	High	1

The table shows that all four axes received high ratings, reflecting the prominent role of the Saudi Red Crescent in spreading the culture of first aid. The "Impact of Campaigns" axis ranked first with an average of (4.12), followed by the "Public Awareness" axis, which confirms the effectiveness of field and media awareness efforts.

Results

The results obtained have shown that the role of the Saudi Red Crescent is not merely a service activity but rather a strategic investment in human capital, aiming to build a healthy and resilient society capable of responding to emergencies effectively and efficiently, in line with the objectives and vision of the Kingdom 2030 in building a vibrant society. The most important results obtained can be explained as follows

- The study demonstrated that the training programs offered by the Saudi Red Crescent, especially those that focus on practical application and simulation, such as CPR and choking relief techniques achieve a qualitative leap in student proficiency
- The study confirmed that practical training reduces the gap between theoretical knowledge and the ability to perform. Ensuring that the student is prepared to intervene in critical moments
- The study showed that simulation contributed to enhancing students' self-confidence, a crucial factor in overcoming hesitation and fear of intervention, increasing the likelihood of their positive response
- The study demonstrated that the role of the Red Crescent's programs is not limited to teaching first aid, but rather contributes to enhancing preventative awareness within the educational environment and society
- The study showed that student trainees were more likely to spread first aid knowledge to their peers and families, ensuring greater awareness-raising impact beyond formal training and creating a community support network
- The study emphasized the importance of institutional partnerships established by the Saudi Red Crescent to ensure the continuity and comprehensiveness of awareness programs. Partnerships with the Ministry of Education and university institutions facilitated systematic and regular access to a large number of students at various educational levels, resulting in broad program coverage

Suggested recommendations

The study demonstrated positive results confirming the effectiveness of practical training in increasing students' competence and awareness, highlighting the urgent need to formulate actionable strategic recommendations. These recommendations aim to translate research findings into sustainable policies and programs that ensure the integration of first aid as a basic life skill. Within the educational system, thus maximizing the societal impact of the Saudi Red Crescent's programs and effectively contributing to achieving the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030 related to building a vibrant and healthy society. These recommendations can be explained as follows

- Basic first aid training should be made a mandatory graduation requirement for all universities and technical colleges, and should be implemented in direct partnership with the Saudi Red Crescent to ensure standardization
- We must work with the Ministry of Education to integrate practical educational modules and simulations of first aid into the curriculum, starting from middle school, so that education is not limited to the theoretical aspect alone
- Scenario-based training should be intensified. Simulating campus environments such as sports injuries, fainting spells, and laboratory accidents to increase students' efficiency and psychological readiness
- The establishment of permanent student clubs at universities and schools under the supervision of the Saudi Red Crescent should be promoted and supported. These clubs aim to train students to become trainers, ensuring the effective and sustainable transfer of knowledge
- The Saudi Red Crescent Authority should invest in and develop digital and interactive educational platforms targeting students, such as apps, short video content, and simulation games, to facilitate access to essential information and motivate students to enroll in advanced courses
- Consider launching a program targeting primary school students to introduce safety concepts and how to seek help, such as calling emergency services, in a simplified and interactive manner to instill the culture at an early age
- Periodic performance tests should be applied. For students who are trained to ensure that acquired skills are not forgotten and lost over time and to provide quick refresher courses
- Universities should collaborate to conduct ongoing quantitative and statistical studies to measure the actual impact of training programs on injury and complication rates within educational institutions, with the aim of identifying program strengths and weaknesses and improving them

- should provide regular, advanced training programs for teachers and academic supervisors to become qualified first contacts for providing first aid in their classrooms and assisting in supervising students' practical training

Conclusion

Based on the above, activating and implementing these recommendations related to strengthening the role of the Saudi Red Crescent in spreading the culture of first aid among school and university students is closely and directly linked to achieving the strategic objectives of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, specifically in the axis of (a vibrant society). By including first aid as a basic graduation requirement and establishing student clubs (for first aid ambassadors), a generation of prepared citizens is being built, enhancing society's resilience and flexibility in the face of emergencies and health crises. This supports the goal of improving quality of life and ensuring the safety of citizens. This shift from recipients of assistance to providers of assistance raises health prevention indicators and reduces the burden on the health system, in line with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of the health system by strengthening primary care.

Focusing on practical training and simulations enhances human capital and provides young people with essential life skills, which raises the level of community participation and self-responsibility and creates an effective and cohesive society, as the Kingdom's vision aspires to. Furthermore, unifying training standards and ensuring its sustainability across educational curricula ensures that this first aid awareness becomes a deeply rooted national culture that supports the comprehensive and sustainable development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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