

A Critical Leadership Skill in Outdoor Sports: Risk Perception

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ABSTRACT

This research was designed to present the risk perception and risk assessment from the perspective of outdoor sports leaders by using the phenomenology design which is one of the qualitative research techniques. The study group consisted of active 13 outdoor sports leaders with at least 10 years of leadership experience selected through criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods. The results were grouped under 3 themes: risk perception, risk management and leadership qualities. Although risk perceptions of the leaders in outdoor sports differ, it can be argued that risk perception and risk assessment are an important component of leadership in all outdoor sports. In addition, the results of this research may be discussed in relation to extreme sports activities such as wingsuit and skydiving that are much more dangerous and life threatening and do not require leader.

Keywords: Outdoor sports, risk perception, risk management

INTRODUCTION

Many of the outdoor sports participants tend to be highly active. Adventure seekers usually expect risk, excitement and serenity in their experiences. These people especially desire to explore untouched, exotic regions on earth and challenge themselves (Millington and Locke, 2001). Outdoor sports leaders are generally responsible for types of programs such as adventure education, environmental education, nature education, guidance, military morale and health, recreation, wilderness therapy, and summer camps (Harrison & Erpelding, 2012). Outdoor and adventure sports leadership involves a complex process, especially when leading a group that has an adventure experience in the natural area. Leaders are faced with many different challenges and responsibilities, both in social interaction with group members and related to the physical environment (Razak, 2013). Being an effective outdoor and adventure leader is a challenging process. Outdoor leaders should have a quality foundation based on expertise and they also need to develop their skills in regards to human relations, training and natural environment (Nicolazzo, 2007). In this process, outdoor and adventure program leaders must fulfill three critical objectives: participant safety, quality of experience and environmental management (Petzoldt & Ringholz, 1984).

Increased interest in outdoor sports, quest for new areas of excitement increased number of participants in outdoor sports have attracted the attention of scientists in this direction and the reasons why individuals prefer outdoor sports and the benefits they gain by doing these sports have become interesting research topics. Research in outdoor sports presents various results in different fields. For example, mountaineering is not just about climbing; it also involves struggle, risk, and difficulty (Graydon & Hanson, 2005). since each of the extreme sports involves different environments, techniques, materials, attitudes and behavioral factors, extreme sports in general are associated with varying ratios of risk which risk motivates participants via its effects on them (Demirhan et. al., 2014; Florenthal & Shoham, 2001; Martha et. al., 2009). The

existence of risk is readily acknowledged in many outdoor sports and experiential programs (Dickson et. al., 2000). Risk means the possibility of loss and damage. Underestimating risk sometimes indicates a lack of experience and judgment; however, ignoring risk is clearly negligent (Adair, 2008). Some of the definitions of risk focus on the probability of an event, while others refer to positive or negative consequences and other factors related to risks under uncertainty (Bessis, 2015). Aven & Renn (2009) define risk as the uncertainty of events and consequences that occur in relation to an activity that people value. The risk may arise from the nature of sports or from people's positive or negative behaviors (Demirhan et. al, 2004).

Research in the field of outdoor recreation focuses on the effect of outdoor recreation on individual's on own competences, experience, skills and concrete perceptions (Dustin et. al., 1986; Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989). According to Priest and Dixon (1991), it is important for outdoor sports leaders to concentrate their attention on the appropriateness of the situation as well as using task-oriented or relationship-oriented behaviors. Those who are new to recreational activities have basic skill levels and often prefer to participate in group or guided activities. They often leave their risk management concerns to a leader. Individuals at this stage generally perceive risk as a discomfort (Grand et. al., 1996). In this process, doing outdoor sports contributes to individuals by providing them with confidence, sociability and happiness and gives them several skills such as taking responsibility, leadership, decision-making and risk-taking skills (McKenzie, 2000). Perception of risk is a subjective assessment of the likelihood of a particular type of accident occurring and how concerned we are with its consequences (Sjöberg et. al., 2004). This shows that risk perception is a very important element in outdoor sports.

Although encountering emergencies is rare for those who consistently participate in experiential programs, it does not mean that there will be no accidents (Shimanski, 2008). Not only risk management in nature but also characteristics such as decision-making ability of outdoor

sports leaders (Wu and Chang, 2010) are important in dealing with accidents experienced outdoors. It is a known fact that risk perception is more realistic in people who are engaged in high-risk sports (Martha & Laurendeau, 2010). Those who work in high-risk environments and with heights know that they risk their own lives and push their physical and mental limits because, thanks to their perceptual experience, they can create a sense of control for the approaching chaos and crisis environment (Lois, 2003). In general, outdoors and adventure activities involve physical struggle situations that are controlled so that participants can perceive physical risks. These activities, which include uncertainty situations in different outcomes, include various levels in overcoming relevant difficulties through testing mental, social and affective expertise against risks by revealing innovative behaviors and ideas (Priest & Gass, 2005).

It is believed that the risk perception of the leader is important for the safety of an activity. Hence, this research aimed to reveal the risk perceptions of outdoor sports leaders during activities and the factors affecting risk management.

For this purpose, participants were asked the following questions:

1. In your opinion, what is risk and how is it encountered outdoors?
2. How do you act in a risky situation?
3. In your opinion, what are the required characteristics in an outdoors leader to manage risks?
4. Have you ever encountered a situation that might create a risk? How did you solve the problem?
5. Is there any unforgettable event that occurred during outdoor sports activities?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Interview technique, one of the qualitative research models, was used in our study.

Research Design: The phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study. Phenomenology design is explained as “focusing on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have a deep and detailed understanding” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). Interview method, one of the qualitative research techniques, was used in the study in order to evaluate the views of outdoor sports leaders on risk perception and risk management.

Population and Sample: In this research, 13 active outdoor sports leaders with at least 10 years of leadership experience formed the study group. These leaders were dominantly involved in outdoor sports such as paragliding, mountaineering, hiking, rock climbing, caving and camping. Participants selected through criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, were included in the study. Creswell and Creswell (2017) stated that the sampling capacity in qualitative research for the phenomenology design may consist of 3-10 people. Within the scope of the present research, the number of the study group was regarded to be sufficient. The basic criteria in participant selection included the following: being outdoor sports leaders with 10 years of experience and being active outdoor sports at the time of the study.

Data Collection Tools: “Interview” method was used during data collection. An interview form was prepared in line with the purpose of the study with “semi-structured open-ended” questions. When the form was developed, the factors affecting the risk perception of outdoor sports leaders were identified by the researchers from scientifically valid resources based on literature review. The questions developed in this manner were then revised by two experts in the field. In addition, “personal information form” prepared by the researchers was used to obtain information about the general profiles of the participants.

The researchers arranged face-to-face interviews with the outdoor sports leaders in 2019 by making appointments. The interview process was based on voluntary participation. The data were recorded with a voice recorder.

Data Analysis: “Descriptive analysis” method and “content analysis” method were used in the study. Prior to the analysis, participants’ responses to the same questions were grouped. The descriptive analysis process followed this order: coding the data, identifying the themes, organizing the data according to themes and codes and creating the sub-themes. Content analysis process focused on the concepts that could be used to explain the obtained data. The purpose of the content analysis technique is to identify similar data among the collected data, to bring them together within the framework of certain concepts and logical themes, and to organize this in a manner that the reader will understand easily (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). The data obtained as a result of the interviews were examined by the authors and two researchers who are experts in their fields. Each participant was coded as “P” and numbered accordingly in order to prevent data confusion and protect the privacy of personal information. Table 1 presents information about the participants’ profiles.

Table 1: Profile of Participants

Participant	Sports Branches	Leadership Experience (years)
P1	Mountaineering, rock climbing, paragliding, caving and camping	12
P2	Mountaineering, hiking, rock climbing and canyoning	18
P3	Paragliding, Mountaineering and hiking	22
P4	Paragliding, Mountaineering, hiking, rock climbing and camping	20
P5	Mountaineering, hiking, rock climbing, caving and camping	18
P6	Paragliding, Mountaineering, hiking, rock climbing, caving and camping	11
P7	Paragliding, Mountaineering, rock climbing and camping	15
P8	Mountaineering, hiking, rock climbing and camping	18
P9	Mountaineering, rock climbing, canoeing and camping	12
P10	Mountaineering, hiking, rock climbing, camping and canyoning	10
P11	Mountaineering, hiking, rock climbing and camping	30
P12	Mountaineering, hiking and camping	21
P13	Mountaineering, hiking and rock climbing	24

Validity and Reliability: Necessary work was carried out meticulously in order to ensure validity and reliability of the study. In terms of authenticity, the findings/ the data were recorded with a voice recorder. Research findings were clearly defined by adhering to the environment and they were found to be consistent with existing theories regarding research questions. Face-to-face interviews were held with the participants and necessary information was provided to them before the research process.

In terms of reliability, descriptions and themes were made created within the framework of direct quotations. Attention was paid to ensure that research questions were clear and concise. Participants and their characteristics were clearly and specifically stated in the study and all processes and methods were explained in stages. Extreme attention was paid so that findings were consistent and meaningful within themselves to ensure integrity.

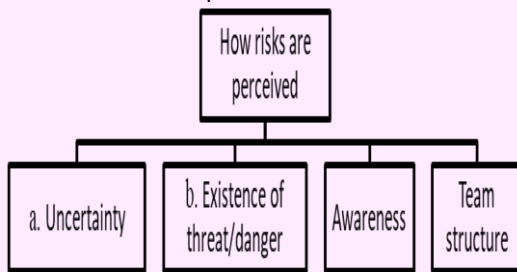
Researchers' Role: Creswell and Creswell (2017) defined the researchers in qualitative research as individuals who spend time in relation to the research field, use their experiences and thoughts about this field in the analysis of the data obtained and are a natural part of the whole research process. In this context, the researchers' 30 years of experience in athleticism, leadership and instruction in rock climbing, paragliding, mountaineering, hiking and canyoning sports provided advantages in the research process.

RESULTS

This section includes the findings and comments based on the interviews. The opinions expressed by the outdoor sports leaders were coded and collected under themes by analyzing the data obtained from the interviews with the participants. Risk perceptions and assessments of outdoor sports leaders were found to include 3 main themes: risk perception, risk management and leadership qualities.

Four sub-themes emerged based on the interview question "In your opinion, what is risk and how is it encountered outdoors?" (Figure 1).

Figure 1. How risks are perceived



The manner the participants perceived risks included the sub-themes of uncertainty, existence of threat/danger, awareness and team structure (Figure 1).

Some of the participants' expressions regarding this theme can be found below;

- "Risk is encountering accidents that occur in unexpected situations. If the team is weak, the probability of encountering problems is higher.." (P1)
- "We can define situations that threaten our activity or health during outdoor sports as risks." (P2)

- "Let's say it is the probability of negativity in an activity to make gains. Our gain in outdoor sports is to finish the activity safely." (P5)
- "What we come across is usually the problems caused by nature." (P7)
- "The highest level of perceptions should always be open" (P9).

Outdoor sports leaders' risk management was analyzed based on the interviews with the participants. Twelve sub-themes emerged based on the interview questions "How do you act in a risky situation?, Have you ever encountered a situation that might create a risk?, "How did you solve the problem?" and "Is there any unforgettable event that occurred during outdoor sports activities?" (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Risk Management



Participants' risk management was found to include the following sub-themes: safety, information, decision making, personal characteristics, training, analysis, team maturity, rapid intervention, experience, staying calm, logistics and being cautious (Figure 2).

Some of the participant expressions in regards to risk management are as follows:

- "Risk is always present in nature... It is necessary to act calmly."* (P1)
 - "I gather everyone in the team in a safe place and inform them in case of a distressing situation. This way, team members can grasp the seriousness of the problem and act accordingly."* (P5)
 - *"That's why we need to solve the small risks we encounter with rapid intervention"* (P7)
 - *"...Telling them that you have taken these risks and experienced these dangers before in a confident manner, aware of the incident; making them believe from their perspective that the problem can be solved"* (P11)
- Outdoor sports leaders' leadership qualities in regards to risk management were analyzed based on the following interview question "In your opinion, what are the required characteristics in an outdoors leader to manage risks?". According to the analysis, thirteen sub-themes emerged (Figure 3).

Table 3. Qualities of Leaders



Participants' opinions on the qualities of leaders were found to be grouped around the following sub-themes: calmness, reliability, keeping calm, perseverance, modesty, giving experience, decision making, training, expertise, moral characteristics, being disciplined, communication and intuition (Figure 3).

Some of the participant expressions regarding leadership qualities are as follows:

- "...I examined by hand and applied pressure there with my t-shirt ... The leader must be calm..." (P2)

- "...work discipline must be present. Discipline and rules is very important in these sports." (P8)

- "a leader must have effective communication skills. He/she needs to be able to make people listen" (P11)

- "... I think it is very important to be calm and to make decisions ... He/she must have solid moral qualities such as showing respect" (P13).

DISCUSSION

Field research and the science related to outdoor sports leadership have mostly focused on situational leadership (Brymer & Gray, 2006). Studies aim to reveal the relationship between leadership theories and outdoor experience. First of all, it is reported in studies that leaders need followers and these followers require certain qualities in their leaders (Ford & Blanchard, 1985). A potential problem with traditional outdoor sports leadership models is the close relationship in the leadership skills classification. In outdoor sports, it is difficult to categorize leadership skills into linear and organized categories because most of these skills overlap with each other (Shooter et. al., 2009). Risk perception, the target point of the present study, has been the subject of many previous studies (Boyer, 2006; Demirhan, 2005; Pröbstl-Haider et. al., 2016; Rosenbloom, 2003; Sokolowska & Pohorille, 2000; Soori, 2000). The reason why risk perception is so important is related to the fact that risk perception plays an effective role in preventing accidents. The annual rate of fatal cases in nature in Austria is 3.9 per 100,000 participants. The vast majority of these deaths are caused by accidents (Gatterer et. al.,

2008; Pröbstl-Haider et. al., 2016). This study was designed based on the idea that risk perception is important in preventing fatal accidents that occur outdoors. Risk perception, which is a basic element of leadership in outdoor sports, is significant here. Acquisitions are possible via learning by doing within the scope of the entire leadership experience and process. This study aimed to present the risk perception gains based on the experiences of extreme sports leaders.

In general, outdoors and adventure programs include activities that involve controlled physical struggle so that the participants can perceive physical risks. These activities, which include uncertainty situations in different outcomes, include the levels of overcoming difficulties such as testing mental, social and affective expertise against risks by revealing innovative behaviors and ideas (Priest & Gass, 2005). The ability to evaluate potential risky situations and avoid extreme risks in these environments emerges as an important life skill (Boyer, 2006). Activities performed in the natural environment provide a type of training that allows individuals to use multiple senses (Priest, 1986). Therefore, these activities provide the participants with abilities such as challenge, mastery and achievement in dealing with difficulties (McGowan, 2016). Cordell and Super (2000) report that activities implemented in the nature show an increasing trend and that especially outdoor sports are a general phenomenon in the developing world. Based on the five interview questions posed to the participants; three categorical main themes were found in regards to leadership in outdoor sports: *risk perception, risk management and outdoor sports leaders' characteristics*.

Participants' views on how risks are perceived brought forth the following subthemes: *uncertainty, existence of threat/danger, awareness and team structure*. The terms such as outdoor sports, extreme sports, action sports, adventure sports, or risky sports which are the focus of this research are often used interchangeably and may include various different activities (Allman et. al., 2009; Brymer et. al., 2009). Outdoor sports leaders are especially expected to have high awareness of environmental dangers. Awareness can also play a key role in many outdoor sports to complete the activity in a healthy manner. Situational awareness is the degree of perspective of a person towards an event and the reflection of his/her current environment (Shimanski, 2008). Outdoor and adventure sports include a lot of uncertainty and threats (such as storm, lightning, rock fall, disappearance). In addition to uncertainty and threat, operating with an unsuitable team may increase the potential risks. Uncertainties can create stress by dragging the leader into a stressful environment in any case. In such cases, the risks posed by uncertainty and threats should be well evaluated. Risk assessment includes a subjective assessment of the probability of encountering negative consequences in cases of uncertainty regarding the outcomes (Rosenbloom, 2003). The higher this probability, the more likely it is to assess that the potential situation involves risk or harm (Hyson & Bollin 1990). It is generally accepted that a lack of perception contributes to unexpected systematic failures and it is assumed that accidents can be avoided through rational action if more

information is available (Ansell & Wharton, 1992; Soori, 2000). Another factor that ensures strong leadership in outdoor sports is the team structure. A strong team can facilitate leadership. The leader observes the situation of the team during the activity period and makes the necessary decisions regarding the team. The high level of maturity in a team may result in decreases in the leader's risk perception. It can also create a sense of false security for the leader. According to Priest and Dixon (1991), extreme sports leaders should pay attention to the maturity level of their team. It can be argued that the 4 sub-themes that emerged for leaders' risk perception in this study are critical steps that affect leadership in outdoor sports. The acquisitions here are that leaders take measures to reduce the uncertainties that they cannot resolve in case of accidents and the presence of danger. In addition, leaders can check the status of the team before the event and take the necessary measures. High awareness in all aspects will reduce possible risks. Research on risk awareness has shown that risks are strongly linked to experience and knowledge (Örley, 2014). According to the results obtained from this research, while how leaders perceive risks differ, they focus on similar issues.

Another factor that is related to participants' risk perceptions is risk management. Participant views on risk management were found to center around the sub-themes of *safety, information, decision making, personal characteristics, training, analysis, team maturity, rapid intervention, experience, staying calm, logistics and being cautious*. Risk management includes a structured approach in regards to actual risk, emotional risk, perceived risk, risk assessment, use of risk management and risk training resources and development of emergency protocols (Pelchat & Karp, 2012). In addition, risk management it is a continuous control of defining, assessing and analyzing risks (Krotee & Bucher, 2007). In recent years, risk management has become one of the most discussed topics in the field of outdoors and adventure fields due to the increasing accidents in the world. Organizations strive to arrange everything to the smallest detail by reviewing their operations and policies to keep these risks to a minimum (Wu & Chang, 2010). Risk management emerged as a key point in outdoor sports in line with the opinions obtained from participants in regards to leaders' risk perception analysis. Many need to be combined in a leader in order to manage risks. It has been observed that basic elements such as staying calm, team maturity, decision making, experience and safety are effective in the risk management process. According to the results in this research, none of these elements are sufficient to ensure risk management on their own, but should be considered as a whole. It is understood from the combination of many sub-elements in this process that risk management is a difficult skill to master. According to Wu and Chang (2010), outdoors risk management is not sufficient on its own in accidents but decision-making ability of outdoors leaders is highly significant as well. According to another study, risk taking in mountain activities is affected by many factors. Experienced mountain groups and casual mountain tourist groups show different risk behaviors and behavioral trends. Other factors such as experience, frequency of participation and commitment, perception of risky

environmental conditions, knowledge, desired level of experience, time management or weather conditions as well as individual risk-related restrictions affect risk taking. Many issues such as inexperienced adventurers, climate changes, etc can affect risk management. For example, climate change poses risks on Alpine tours increasingly and in a new manner (Pröbstl-Haider et. al., 2016).

Among those who do outdoor sports, there are people seeking for adventure and who act in the company of a guide. This activity, called adventure tourism, is a guided tour in nature composed of various activities which focus on the natural environment as the main attraction center, require special equipment and operators and include risk elements for interested customers (Buckley, 2006). Participants who engage in these commercial adventure activities want to experience fear and excitement primarily rather than real risks (Cater, 2006). However, risks in these tours can go beyond what is expected because group maturity and experience maybe not developed at all. While such commercial activities increase the risk, they can also create conditions that will make risk management quite difficult. Leadership becomes even more important in these situations. Martin et. al. (2006) argue that risk management is a key element of effective outdoor leadership. The inclusion of risk management in the curricula of schools that provide outdoor leadership training (Gookin, 2006) is a clear indicator that it is a very important issue. Experience has emerged as one of the biggest components of risk management. According to Swiderski (1987), gaining experience is an important part of risk management, because leaders can better evaluate the danger and make decisions when they are experienced (Paisley et. al., 2008). It is known that experience is an important element in many outdoor sports activities. Risk management, which is the main factor affecting leaders' risk perception, can be regarded as an indispensable element in outdoor sports leadership. As the studies in the literature demonstrate, risk management is a process that develops due to the combination of many components. It can be assumed that leaders who can manage risks well have an improved risk perception.

According to the results in this study, the qualities that leaders are critical in terms of risk perception. Participants' views on leadership qualities pointed to sub-themes such as *calmness, reliability, keeping calm, perseverance, modesty, giving experience, decision making, training, expertise, moral characteristics, being disciplined, communication and intuition*. Studies have shown that leadership qualities are important for risk perception (McKenzie, 2000; Martha & Laurendeau, 2010). Outdoor sports leaders are expected to have these qualities. As explained above, the leadership role undertaken in extreme sports is a highly sensitive and critical task. This sensitive role necessitates being a well-equipped leader. Leadership qualities found in this research also reveal that perceiving and managing risks is a complex issue. Risk in outdoor sports is inevitable in most cases but this risk can be felt at high levels or at low levels. The leader's qualities can have a decisive effect about the level of perceived or actual risks. Some researchers have group the leadership traits in outdoor sports as hard skills and soft skills. Definitions and origins of these terms still vary and the authors take

different approaches to grouping and categorizing outdoor leaders' skills. In general, hard skills and soft skills have started to be among the descriptions used when defining outdoor leaders' skills (Shooter et. al., 2009). Most of the qualities revealed in this research are consistent with the literature. Luckner and Nadler (1997) emphasized that the characteristics of leadership such as empathy, care, acceptance, reliability, compassion, creativity, reasoning and desire to provide encouragement are necessary for effective leadership. According to Sokolowska and Pohorille (2000), perceived risk is useful in estimating the acceptance rates for danger. Leadership expertise includes dignity, decision-making, stress level, fatigue and perceptual capacity (Priest & Dixon, 1991).

The increase in the number of people who engage in outdoor sports has also demonstrated the shortage of personnel with necessary qualifications who can guide individuals in this field (Martin et. al., 2006). In general, outdoor and adventure program leaders must have competences in four basic skill areas: human skills, open field skills, management skills and training skills (Harrison & Erpelding, 2012). According to Cox (1984), the most desired outdoor sports leadership traits are courage, integrity, patience, humility, competence and strength. According to Shooter et. al. (2009), it is necessary to have sufficient reasoning and decision-making skills to be able to lead effectively. In their research, Kılınc et. al. (2016) point out that the risk of accidents is quite high in activities such as outdoor sports and draw attention to the need for good leaders who can take part or organize rescue efforts. In these cases, decision making, planning, evaluation and coordination are extremely important in terms of search and rescue. All studies reveal the importance of leadership qualities in outdoor sports and therefore support the results obtained in this study. The present results are also important in terms of the team's trust in the leader in managing the risk in outdoor sports. The ability of a leader to perceive risks may also indicate that he/she has good qualities. Chandler (2001) report that a person who can be a leader displays the necessary signs which are being determined, experienced, goal-oriented, ability to communicate, ability to manage stress, ability to listen, being open-minded, being responsible, being trained and being prepared. Literature review shows that the qualities that should be found in outdoor sports leaders have a wide range. The impact of the risk factor in outdoor sports suggests that all these qualities are critical in minimizing damage or determining the leader's risk perception capacity. On the other hand, the high number of qualities that outdoor sports leaders should have gives the idea that not everybody can be suitable for this role. According to Cousineau (1978), while personality constitutes the most important part of leadership in outdoor sports, and characteristics such as field skills, leadership experience, safety skills, age and condition support leadership skills. Personality can be considered as a different area that needs to be studied in outdoor sports.

As explained before, another important issue that shapes the perception of risk and creates danger is that inexperienced people often seek adventure. Adventure tourism, which is included in this study, is one of the least discussed but fastest growing type in the tourism industry

(Buckley, 2006). The attractive aspect of outdoor sports has led to a serious development in the adventure tourism industry. Due to this rapid development and expansion, experienced leaders have started to work especially in companies engaged in adventure tourism. The reasons why these companies desire to employ experienced leaders may also be related to reducing relevant risk factors. According to the results in this study, it can be argued that experienced leaders are important in reducing risks. Adventure tourism is leisure time activity based practice that takes place in unusual, exotic, remote and wild places, often in the nature, with a high level of participation (Cater, 2006). In recent years, participation in adventure tourism and recreation has also attracted particular attention in regards to land management (Hendee & Dawson, 2002). It can be argued that land management is an important leadership skill as well because accurate assessment and evaluation of land can play a role in preventing serious dangers. This is also associated with intuition, a strong and critical leadership quality. This factor directly affects the risk perception and management. Due to the increase in adventure tourism, it is believed that individuals who will act as leaders in this sector must have the necessary equipment. Many of the individuals who participate in adventure tourism may not participate in outdoor sports as much. In this case, there is a high probability of imminent risks. Therefore, it is expected that outdoor sports leaders involved in adventure tourism have the necessary equipment. Benefits of doing outdoor sports for individuals can be associated with learning group dynamics, leadership, giving confidence, individual decision-making, risk management, taking responsibility for self and others, positive contribution to personality and body development, positive influence on self and others, feeling happy, interacting with others and socializing (McKenzie, 2000). These elements contribute to leadership development. It is a known fact that risk perception is more realistic in people who are engaged in high-risk sports (Martha & Laurendeau, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Risk perception is a basic outdoor sports leadership skill. The risk perception of outdoor sports leaders is an extremely effective feature in preventing dangers. How risks are perceived, risk management and leadership qualities have emerged as the most fundamental elements in leaders' risk perception. Although how leaders perceive risks in outdoor sports differ; it can be argued that risk perception and assessment is an important component of leadership in all outdoor sports. Considering the risks inherent in outdoor sports, conducting activities under the supervision of experienced, expert and effective leaders can create a safer activity environment.

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