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Predicting Female Managers' Feelings of Loneliness based on Couples' Communication Patterns and Interpersonal Dependence: The Mediating Role of Spiritual Health

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Abstract: This study quantitatively examined the level of emotional engagement generated by literary texts in Persian language textbooks and identified factors influencing this engagement among fourth, fifth, and sixth-grade elementary students. Utilizing a descriptive-survey design, the study sampled 90 students (30 per grade) and 37 teachers from Tehran during the 2019–2020 academic year via stratified random sampling. Data were collected through researcher-developed five-point Likert scale questionnaires (9 items for students; 11 for teachers) and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings revealed a significant decline in text attractiveness as grade levels increased; 50% of fourth-graders rated texts as "very attractive" compared to only 13.3% of sixth-graders ($p<0.001$). Story topic and content" was identified as the primary driver of interest (mean: 4.2 out of 5). Additionally, the closeness of topics to lived experiences differed significantly across grades ($p<0.001$), with sixth-grade students reporting a substantial disconnect between textbook content and their personal lives. Persian textbooks in higher elementary grades, particularly the sixth grade, fail to sufficiently foster emotional engagement or affective development. To enhance educational effectiveness, curriculum developers should revise literary selections to better align with students' evolving lived experiences and developmental needs.

Keywords: Persian Language Textbook, Upper Elementary Education, Affective Development, Text Attractiveness

Introduction

Childhood and early adolescence are considered among the most sensitive stages of emotional and cognitive development (Bergey et al., 2017). Basic emotions such as joy, fear, and anger emerge during early childhood; however, self-conscious emotions such as pride, shame, and guilt develop during middle childhood (ages 7–12) and require appropriate social and cultural contexts (Blomert, 2005). The second cycle of elementary education (Grades 4–6) represents a critical period for the formation of complex emotions through engagement with literary texts (Blomlie et al., 1996). Emotionally enriched environments—whether within the family or at school—play a decisive role in fostering responsibility and adolescents' emotional development (Boada et al., 2012). Literary texts can function as a "surrogate emotional environment," providing role models for students (Bogon et al., 2014).

Media, including textbooks, can influence all four dimensions of development: cognitive, psychological, social, and emotional. Particularly in the emotional domain, content aligned with children's emotional

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needs can enhance empathy and emotional regulation (Boot et al., 2011). In educational contexts, emotional development occurs through three stages: recognition, acceptance, and internalization of values (Bosse et al., 2007). A child first recognizes a value or emotion in a text, then accepts it, and ultimately internalizes it (Briscoe & Rankin, 2009). Well-designed instructional content can facilitate emotional growth even among students with special needs (Jenkins, 2015).

One of the fundamental goals of literature education is fostering *literary interest*—the enjoyment derived from reading and appreciating textual beauty. Such enjoyment can strengthen reading motivation and promote lifelong learning (Kramsch, 2013). Through affective–creative activities such as storytelling and drama performance, children develop not only cognitive skills but also empathy and emotional understanding (Phillipson, 1992).

Empirical evidence suggests that many students show little interest in Persian language textbooks, often perceiving them as dry and unenjoyable. This issue is particularly significant during the second cycle of elementary education (Grades 4–6), when children enter early adolescence and develop more complex emotional needs. If Persian textbooks fail to establish meaningful emotional connections with students, this emotional gap may lead to long-term disengagement from reading in adulthood (Porto, 2014). Therefore, the present study aimed to examine the role of literary texts in Persian textbooks in fostering the emotional and affective development of elementary school students through a quantitative analysis.

Material and Methods

This study employed a descriptive–survey design with a quantitative and comparative (cross-sectional) approach. The independent variable was grade level (fourth, fifth, and sixth grade). The dependent variables included text attractiveness, sense of enjoyment, age appropriateness, the role of classroom discussion, closeness to students' experiences, and factors influencing enjoyment.

The statistical population consisted of all upper-elementary students (Grades 4–6) and their teachers in Tehran in 2020. The student sample included 90 participants (30 from each grade level), selected using the Cochran formula and stratified random sampling based on district and gender. The teacher sample consisted of 37 participants (11 fourth-grade teachers, 16 fifth-grade teachers, and 10 sixth-grade teachers), selected through purposive sampling.

The research instrument included a student questionnaire with 9 closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale (very much, much, moderate, little, very little/never). The questionnaire was completed through self-report by students. Sample items included: "Are the texts in your Persian textbook attractive to you?"; "Do you feel enjoyment after reading the texts?"; and "Which of the

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following factors (topic, characters, language, information) has the greatest influence on your enjoyment?"

The teacher questionnaire contained 11 similar Likert-scale items (e.g., "Is the textbook content attractive for students?"). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.87 for the student questionnaire and 0.89 for the teacher questionnaire, indicating excellent reliability. Content validity was confirmed by three university experts (two specialists in curriculum studies and one in educational measurement and evaluation).

The questionnaires were distributed and collected during a 20-minute classroom session. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 18. Chi-square tests were used to compare categorical variables across grade levels, while one-way ANOVA with Tukey post hoc tests was applied for continuous variables. The significance level was set at 0.05.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose of the research prior to completing the questionnaires. Informed consent was obtained from teachers and school authorities, and students participated with the awareness and approval of their teachers and schools. Participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential, and the collected data were used solely for research purposes. Additionally, students were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Results

The findings of this study are presented in two sections. The first section reports the results obtained from the questionnaires completed by 90 students in Grades 4, 5, and 6, while the second section presents the perspectives of 37 teachers regarding the level of literary interest generated by Persian language textbooks.

Student Findings

The first question examined the perceived attractiveness of Persian textbook texts from the students' perspective. Table 1 presents the distribution of responses to the question: "Are the texts in your Persian textbook attractive to you?" by grade level. The Chi-square test indicated a significant difference among the three grades in response distribution (χ^2 (4) = 10.79, $p < 0.001$). The highest proportion of "very attractive" responses was observed in Grade 4 (50%), while the lowest was in Grade 6 (13.3%). This 36.7% decline indicates a concerning decrease in perceived attractiveness as grade level increases. Additionally, 20% of sixth-grade students rated the texts as "low in attractiveness," compared with only

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3.3% in Grade 4, suggesting that the texts in the sixth-grade Persian textbook are less aligned with students' developmental needs and interests.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of text attractiveness by grade

Grade	Very attractive (%)	Relatively attractive (%)	Low attractiveness (%)	Not attractive (%)
Fourth	50.0	46.7	3.3	0.0
Fifth	23.3	53.5	23.3	0.0
Sixth	13.3	66.7	20.0	0.0

The second question addressed students' sense of enjoyment after reading Persian texts. Table 2 presents the distribution of responses. The Chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference among the three grades (χ^2 (4) = 21.68, $p < 0.001$). The pattern indicates that with increasing grade level, the experience of enjoyment reported as "always" decreases, while "rarely" increases. A notable finding is that 43.3% of sixth-grade students reported rarely experiencing enjoyment, whereas this proportion was only 6.7% in both fourth and fifth grades, indicating that the texts are less stimulating and engaging for older students.

Table 2. Distribution of enjoyment after reading texts by grade

Grade	Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
Fourth	36.7	56.7	6.7	0.0
Fifth	26.7	66.7	6.7	0.0
Sixth	13.3	43.3	43.3	0.0

The third question examined students' evaluation of the age appropriateness of stories in the Persian textbook. As shown in Table 3, 76.7% of fourth-grade students rated the stories as "very high" or "high" in age appropriateness. In contrast, 63.3% of fifth-grade students rated them only as "moderate," and 6.7% of sixth-grade students rated them as "low." These results indicate that textbook stories appear less suitable for higher grades and may not adequately correspond with students' cognitive and developmental needs.

Table 3. Age appropriateness of Persian textbook stories

Grade	Very high (%)	High (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)
Fourth	36.7	40.0	23.3	0.0
Fifth	10.0	26.7	63.3	0.0
Sixth	20.0	30.0	43.3	6.7

The fifth question investigated which sections of the Persian textbook generate the greatest enjoyment. As shown in Table 4, stories and narratives were the most preferred section across all grades, with an overall mean of 60%, followed by poetry (38.9%). In contrast, instructional sections such as language knowledge (1.1%) and comprehension activities (0%) were almost entirely unattractive to students. These findings suggest that students' literary engagement is closely associated with imagination,

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narrative structure, and aesthetic language, whereas purely instructional sections fail to create a meaningful literary experience.

Table 4. Students' preferred sections of the Persian textbook

Grade	Stories & narratives (%)	Poems (%)	Language knowledge (%)	Comprehension (%)
Fourth	53.3	46.7	0.0	0.0
Fifth	63.3	36.7	0.0	0.0
Sixth	63.3	33.3	3.3	0.0
Overall mean	60.0	38.9	1.1	0.0

The sixth question asked students to identify the most influential factor in their interest among four options: characters, language style, topic/content, and information provided. Table 5 shows that topic and content were the strongest determinant of interest, with a weighted mean of 61.1%. This indicates that students primarily value engaging narrative content. Characters ranked second (28.8%), with a significant difference across grades ($p < 0.05$). Characters were most influential in Grade 5 (36.7%) but declined in importance in Grade 6 (20%), possibly reflecting weaker character development in sixth-grade texts. Language style (3.3%) and informational content (6.7%) played minimal roles in generating interest.

Table 5. Factors influencing literary interest (percentage of respondents)

Grade	Characters (%)	Language style (%)	Topic & content (%)	Information (%)
Fourth	30.0	3.3	56.7	10.0
Fifth	36.7	0.0	60.0	3.3
Sixth	20.0	6.7	66.7	6.7
Weighted mean	28.8	3.3	61.1	6.7

The ninth question assessed the degree to which textbook topics relate to students' experiences and emotions. Table 6 shows a highly significant difference among grades (χ^2 (6) = 41.34, $p < 0.001$). In Grade 4, 36.7% of students rated the closeness as "very high" or "high," while this decreased to 23.3% in Grade 5 and 20% in Grade 6. Conversely, 43.3% of sixth-grade students reported low relevance to their experiences, compared with only 6.7% in Grade 4. This substantial experiential gap suggests that sixth-grade texts are less relatable to students' real-life experiences.

Table 6. Closeness of textbook topics to students' experiences and emotions

Grade	Very high (%)	High (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)
Fourth	6.7	30.0	56.7	6.7
Fifth	3.3	20.0	73.7	3.3
Sixth	3.3	16.7	36.7	43.3

To compare the overall literary interest score (composite of Questions 1, 2, 3, and 9; range 4–20), a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Table 7 presents the results. A significant difference was found among the three grades ($F (2,87) = 15.34$, $p < 0.001$). Tukey post-hoc tests indicated significant differences

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between all grade pairs ($p < 0.05$). The mean score declined from 16.2 in Grade 4 **to** 14.4 in Grade 5 and 11.8 in Grade 6, indicating a systematic decrease in literary interest as grade level increases.

Table 7. One-way ANOVA results for overall literary interest score (range: 4–20)

Grade	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Fourth	16.2	2.8	15.34	0.001
Fifth	14.4	3.1		
Sixth	11.8	3.3		

Teacher Findings

This section presents the results obtained from the questionnaires completed by 37 teachers of Grades 4–6. Teachers, as the primary implementers of the curriculum and individuals who directly observe students' reactions to textbook texts, provide valuable insights into the attractiveness, literary quality, and enjoyment level of textbook content.

The first question evaluated teachers' perceptions of the attractiveness and usefulness of Persian textbook content. As shown in Table 8, the mean attractiveness score was 3.1 in Grade 4, 3.4 in Grade 5, and 3.0 in Grade 6 (out of 5). Although ANOVA results did not show a statistically significant difference among grades ($p > 0.05$), a declining trend is visible. Notably, 10% of sixth-grade teachers selected "very low," while this option was not selected in the other grades, indicating some dissatisfaction with sixth-grade content.

Table 8. Teachers' evaluation of the attractiveness and usefulness of Persian textbook content

Grade	Very high (%)	High (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)	Very low (%)
Fourth	9.1	36.4	36.4	18.2	0.0
Fifth	0.0	43.8	56.2	0.0	0.0
Sixth	0.0	30.0	60.0	0.0	10.2

The second question examined teachers' perceptions of the extent to which Persian textbooks address children's developmental, emotional, and cognitive needs. Table 9 shows that 20% of sixth-grade teachers rated this attention as "very low," while none of the fourth-grade teachers selected this option. The Chi-square test confirmed a significant difference among grades ($p < 0.05$). These findings align with student responses, suggesting that the sixth-grade Persian textbook demonstrates the lowest responsiveness to students' developmental needs.

Table 9. Teachers' perceptions of attention to children's needs

Grade	High (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)	Very low (%)
Fourth	36.4	63.6	0.0	0.0
Fifth	25.0	62.5	12.5	0.0
Sixth	20.0	60.0	0.0	20.0

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The ninth teacher question examined the role of characters and story events in generating literary interest. As shown in Table 10, 40% of sixth-grade teachers rated the influence of characters and narrative events as "low," representing the highest dissatisfaction among the three grades. In comparison, only 9.1% of fourth-grade teachers and 12.5% of fifth-grade teachers expressed this view. These findings suggest that character development in sixth-grade Persian texts is relatively weak and less effective in emotionally engaging students. The simultaneous increase in both "very high" (30%) and "low" (40%) responses in Grade 6 also indicates considerable inconsistency in the quality of texts within this grade level.

Table 10. Role of characters and narrative events in creating literary interest (teachers' views)

Grade	Very high (%)	High (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)
Fourth	9.1	27.3	54.5	9.1
Fifth	18.8	37.5	31.3	12.5
Sixth	30.0	10.0	20.0	40.0

Discussion

Overall, the findings from the teacher data indicate that, from their perspective, the attractiveness and enjoyment of Persian textbook texts fall within a moderate to low range. Teachers pointed to several shortcomings, including language that is not well aligned with students' age levels, limited thematic diversity, weak illustrations and descriptive settings, and insufficient capacity of the texts to stimulate reading motivation and emotional engagement. Moreover, the declining trend in teachers' satisfaction from fourth to sixth grade, along with the increased dissatisfaction reported in Grade 6—particularly regarding attention to children's developmental needs and the role of characters—suggests that the sixth-grade Persian textbook requires substantial revision. These evaluations fully correspond with the findings from the student section and indicate that the current condition of Persian textbooks, especially in Grade 6, is not optimal in fostering literary interest or supporting students' emotional development.

The findings of this study provide a clear, quantitatively grounded picture of students' literary engagement and its role in emotional development during upper elementary education. One of the most significant outcomes of this research is the identification of a systematic and significant decline in text attractiveness from Grade 4 to Grade 6. The 36.7% decrease in the frequency of the response "always" to the question about enjoyment (from 36.7% in Grade 4 to 13.3% in Grade 6) and the corresponding 36.6% increase in the response "rarely" (from 6.7% to 43.3%) reveal an alarming pattern with important implications for curriculum development and textbook design. Beyond its statistical significance ($p < .001$), this pattern is pedagogically concerning, as it suggests that the primary formal source through

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which students encounter literature is gradually becoming less enjoyable and potentially discouraging for the development of reading habits.

Within the framework of Lewis's theory of emotional development, the age range of 7–12 years represents a critical developmental period during which self-conscious emotions such as pride, shame, guilt, and complex forms of empathy are formed and organized (Kramsch, 2013). Unlike basic emotions that have biological foundations, these emotions require rich social and cultural contexts for their emergence and development. Persian textbooks in Grades 4 and 5 appear to provide such a context to some extent; however, in Grade 6—precisely when students approach adolescence and increasingly need opportunities to experience complex emotions through identification with literary characters—this context becomes significantly weakened (Phillipson, 1992). In other words, at the most critical stage of emotional development, the Persian textbook partially loses its educational function and creates a meaningful gap in students' emotional growth (Porto, 2014). If textbooks fail to provide opportunities for emotional identification and affective processing during this sensitive developmental window, the opportunity to cultivate a lasting attachment to reading may be lost.

A second important finding of this study is the identification of "story topic and content" as the strongest factor influencing students' perception of textual attractiveness and emotional engagement, with a weighted mean of 61.1%. This finding is highly consistent with Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading, which emphasizes the fundamental distinction between efferent reading (reading for information) and aesthetic reading (reading for lived experience and emotional engagement). Aesthetic reading occurs when the reader becomes immersed in the text and when the content establishes a meaningful interaction with the reader's inner world and horizon of expectations. Students clearly prefer stories that transport them to imaginative worlds beyond everyday reality rather than texts dominated by dry information or predetermined facts (Soodmand Afshar & Moradifar, 2021).

Emotional development within educational contexts typically progresses through three successive stages: recognition, acceptance, and internalization. The first stage—recognition—occurs when a student encounters an emotional situation in a text and becomes aware of it (Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2014). However, authentic emotional growth requires progression to acceptance (empathetic engagement) and eventually to internalization, where the value or emotion becomes part of the individual's internal value system (Yuen, 2011). The findings of this study indicate that the topics and themes of Persian textbooks—particularly in Grade 6—have become so distant from students' lived experiences that even the initial stage of recognition is difficult to achieve, let alone acceptance or internalization (Aliakbari, 2002).

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A third—and perhaps the most thought-provoking—finding of this research is the significant decline in the perceived closeness of textbook topics to students' lived experiences in Grade 6. While only 6.7% of fourth-grade students perceived a low level of relevance, this proportion increased to 43.3% among sixth-grade students, representing a 36.6% difference that was statistically significant ($p < .001$). This result indicates a substantial gap between the content of Persian textbooks and the lived reality of students. From the perspective of emotional attachment theory, the first prerequisite for establishing a meaningful emotional connection between reader and text is the possibility of "seeing oneself within the text." When textbook themes move away from children's lived experiences—such as friendships, family interactions, school life, everyday emotions, social challenges, and identity exploration—students may feel that the text does not belong to them, which gradually leads to avoidance rather than engagement (Apple, 2004).

From another theoretical perspective, Piaget's stages of cognitive development suggest that sixth-grade students (around age 12) are transitioning from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage, gaining the ability to think abstractly, generate hypotheses, and understand multi-layered concepts. However, the Persian textbook at this level still largely relies on simple narratives, predetermined moral lessons, and one-dimensional characters, which are more appropriate for earlier developmental stages. This developmental mismatch may therefore be one of the principal reasons for the observed decline in text attractiveness and the stagnation of emotional engagement in Grade 6 (Atai et al., 2017).

A fourth key finding of this study is the positive and compensatory role of classroom discussion and dialogue. Despite the considerable decline in text attractiveness in Grade 6, 60% of students in this grade still evaluated the impact of classroom discussion as "high" or "very high." This finding is important for two reasons. First, it indicates that skilled teachers who employ interactive pedagogical strategies—such as guided discussions, thought-provoking questions, and collaborative group activities—can partially compensate for the emotional limitations of the textbook content. Second, it demonstrates that the Persian textbook in Grade 6 does not possess sufficient intrinsic capacity to fulfill its educational role in fostering emotional development, and therefore increasingly relies on human mediators—namely competent and empathetic teachers—to activate students' emotional engagement (Baker, 2015).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Persian textbooks in the upper elementary grades—particularly Grade 6—have not fully succeeded in fulfilling their role in supporting students' emotional and affective development. As the quantitative findings of this study clearly demonstrate, this emotional gap, if not addressed through comprehensive revision of content selection, narrative structures, and textual design, may lead to long-

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term consequences. Such consequences may include reduced intrinsic motivation for reading, avoidance of literary texts in later stages of education, and even mild psychological effects such as diminished psychological capital or a sense of meaninglessness in learning experiences.

Addressing these issues requires a systematic reconsideration of textbook design, ensuring that literary texts are developmentally appropriate, emotionally engaging, and closely connected to students' lived experiences. Only through such reforms can Persian textbooks effectively contribute to both literary appreciation and emotional development during this critical stage of childhood and early adolescence.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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