Vol.6, No.11
Spring & Summer 2026
Research Article

Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature, Arts and Humanities

10.22077/islah.2025.8655.1575

Received: 02/02/2025 **Accepted: 09/09/2025**

Challenges in Iranian children and Adolescents' Fiction

Maryam Jalali[1]

Mahmoud Fazilat[2]

Elham Zamani[3]

Abstract

Children and adolescent literature in Iran is still a developing field. Studies in the field of children's literature are interdisciplinary and include fields of psychology, social sciences, Persian literature, and educational sciences. Limited studies exist on the challenges of children's literature in Iran. The aim of this study is to extract the components of "content challenges in children and adolescents' fiction" considering the current situation.The current study was conducted using qualitative content analysis. The study is an applied research and adopts an inductive approach and employed the interview method for data collection. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 people who were subject experts, authors, and key informants. After documenting the interviews, semantic units were extracted as codes, then were grouped and categorized. Initially, 186 codes were collected. After removing duplicates, the total number of codes decreased to 117. Finally, by merging and combining the codes, the final number reached 48. These 48 codes were classified into five main components and 24 sub-components The content analysis of the interview texts showed the challenges of children's fiction in five main components, these components are 1- translated stories; 2- content production;

1. Associate Professor in Persian Language and Literature, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, Iran ma_jalali@sbu.ac.ir
2. Professor in Persian Language and Literature, Department of Persian Language and Literature, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran mfazilat@ut.ac.ir
3. Ph.D in Persian Language and Literature and Invited Lecturer, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran elham_zamani@ut.ac.ir

How to cite this article:
Maryam Jalali; Mahmoud Fazilat; Elham Zamani. "Challenges in Iranian children and Adolescents' Fiction". Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature, Arts and Humanities, 6, 1, 2026, 113-138. doi: 10.22077/islah.2025.8655.1575

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Licensee Journal of *Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature, Arts & Humanities*. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

3- Author or Authorship; 4- The role of governance; 5- social and cultural conditions of society. Analysis and review of the opinions of experts in the field of children and adolescents' literature showed that, despite the fact that the number of copies of books published in the field of children and adolescents in the country is increasing, and there are numerous challenges in the field of children and adolescents' fiction. The challenges in various areas such as the content of works, the role of governance, writing, and translated works require attention, planning, and policy-making of the major authorities. Given the intergenerational role adolescents play in both receiving and transmitting social and cultural concepts, any indifference in this process can lead to numerous future cultural and social challenges. Therefore, knowing that the youth fiction in Iran is evolving, there is a need to pay more attention to the challenges found out in the research.

Keywords: children and adolescents' literature, content, fiction, The role of governance.

Introduction

"Children and adolescent literature" are works whose main audience is children and adolescents, and the specific characteristics of each age group are considered for writing books for them. Children's literature in Iran has an ancient history that goes back to the pre-Islam era. As Tafazzoli saied, "Iranians have long understood the importance of stories and fairy tales for children. Ancient Greek historians refer to several things about how Iranian children were raised, one of which is fairy tales" (Tafdzoli 1997: 30).

> In ancient Persian literature, there are stories such as animal stories, moral and allegorical poems, and instructive stories, whose main audience was children and adolescents. For example, the book *Kelileh and Demneh* and many stories from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh are such works. These works have always attracted the attention of children and adolescents because of their simple and understandable language and content for children and adolescents (Saffarzadeh 2011:18).

In general, fiction literature for children and adolescents is considered a very new literature compared to the history of literature in a general sense, and its

contemporary form dates back to about two centuries ago. With the passing of years and the change of the social and cultural conditions of Iran, the literature of children and adolescents has also evolved. In later periods, especially since the Qajar period, literary works for children and adolescents further developed. In the contemporary period, due to the increasing importance of this literary field, more comprehensive definitions have been presented. For example, After discussing the goals and principles of children's and adolescents' literature, Sarshar offers this definition:

> Children's and adolescents' literature is a collection of stories, poems, and plays that, while possessing the necessary literary essence and quality, have been created in accordance with the mental and psychological characteristics (talents, interests, tendencies) and needs of children and adolescents, within the framework of the principles of education approved by the Islamic law (Sarshar 2013: 121).

Shafiei Kadkani, in an interview about children's literature points out:

> We pay extremely little attention to the issue of educating children. The child's mind is infinitely capable. We take this too lightly and underestimate it too much. Without considering all aspects of our traditional education or the advances that have occurred in the global field of children. We neglect our historical possibilities in the field of educating children, which will practically be the education of future generations... The most difficult task is to write poetry for children (Shafiei Kadkani 2021).

Studies and research in the field of children's literature are interdisciplinary and include the fields of psychology, social sciences, Persian literature, and educational sciences. In this study, the psychological, educational, and political aspects of children's fiction have been examined.

In later periods, especially from the Qajar period, literary works for children and adolescents were spread. In the contemporary period, due to the increasing importance of this literary field, more comprehensive definitions have been presented. Anvari defines children's literature as "that part of literature that is prepared and arranged with appropriate language and content for children and adolescents" (2012: 59). In general, children and adolescent's literature includes all kinds of stories, poems, plays and other literary texts, which are produced and presented considering the

characteristics of growth and development in different age groups and the principles of education.

"Fictional literature" for children and adolescents in Iran has started since the middle of the 19th century AD (Aghajani 2019: 57), the first stories printed for this audience were published in the form of reading books and newspaper supplements (Hosseini 2021: 80). In the 1940s, regular story books for Iranian children and adolescents began to be published, and after the Islamic Revolution, this field was further developed (Daneshpour 2015: 36). Children's literature in Iran has been on the path of evolution in recent decades. These developments are caused by social and cultural changes and have led to the formation of new approaches. Translation has contributed to the enrichment of children's literature in Iran and has given more diversity to this field. Criticism of children and adolescent literary works has increased in the media and literary meetings, and various festivals and institutions have been established to support the authors and publishers of this literature. These developments show the dynamics and growth of children fiction literature in Iran.

As Walter Benjamin said in the one-way street; "If you build things for children, you must remember the standards of this small world; and not to let the activities of adults and the supplies they need enter the children's world" (2015: 27). There was a time when the world of children and adolescents was not acknowledged by adults. As a result, children's literature either did not exist, was scarce, or lacked a continuous and distinct presence. Today, however, it is officially recognized and has developed into a literature of its own. Despite this progress, we still occasionally encounter works in which the boundary between childhood and adulthood is blurred.

> An author who writes for children faces limitations since he/she has to write for children of a certain age group; Therefore, he does not have complete freedom in choosing the subject of the story and writing style. He should consider the desires and tastes of the age group of the audience. He should be familiar with the mental coordinates of children and their age characteristics. In choosing words, he should follow principles according to the age of the audience. In short, writing for children is accepting a kind of obligation (Poladi 2008: 152).

"The creator of children's literature cannot talk about anything with a general idea and a vague image of a child and childhood, with a unintelligible language and and a

confused and childish thought" (Hafezi 2012: 13).

Many writers and critics in the realm of children's literature emphasize that this type of literature must possess specific characteristics, and that works created for children should be evaluated using a distinct set of criteria. However, there is no widespread consensus and general understanding regarding what these criteria should entail. In the absence of established criteria, any writer, whether a novice or an expert, may believe that writing for children is less challenging than writing for adults, as Hafizi notes, "by breaking the conventions of adult language and formal as well as conversational writing" (Hafezi 2003: 11), they create works suited for children and adolescents.

The content and the theme of the story, which is the thought that dominates every literary work, is of particular importance in children and adolescent stories because discovering the theme leads to a better understanding of the story and its characters. Finally, it leads to a deeper understanding for the audience.

The content of fiction reflects the rules of human life in society or it is the life itself. Therefore,

> the function of an author is the same as the function of a sociologist and psychoanalyst. The author is a seeker with the tools of art to discover, analyze, and explain social rules and structures, and investigate the cognition and psyche of people and the psychology of social types (Mirsadeghi 2022: 55).

The theme revolves around the concept of "inside," which implies both internal and relational aspects. Beyond merely referring to a subject, it embodies the fundamental principle of everything—the infinitive and the foundational essence. Generally, the subject signifies the inner principle governing all things. Additionally, the theme encompasses the meanings derived from words and phrases (Daad 2006: 138). The theme is "the main and dominant idea of any work; it is a line or string that runs through the work and connects the situations of the story" (Daad 2006: 131). Jamal Mirsadeghi believes that the theme is "an idea derived from the author's personal experiences, a thought inspired by life itself." (Mirsadeghi 1997: 176). Also, "the content of the story, which is sometimes interpreted as the main idea, theme, or message, reflects the author's perspective on the subject matter." (Mastur 2012: 30).

Even though fiction for children and adolescents in Iran today is of high

quality and variety, and numerous works are created and published in this genre, there are still many challenges in this field that need to be investigated. One of these challenges, or rather, the criticisms that come for children and adolescents' fiction, is in the discussion of the content and the theme of the stories. What features and criteria this content should have, what topics should and should not be addressed, and what should authors and publishers pay attention to? The purpose of the present study is to identify, classify, and explain the challenges of the genre of fiction for children and adolescents in Iran with a view to the experts' perspectives.

Lterature Review

Limited studies exist on the challenges of children's literature in Iran, primarily using quantitative or qualitative content analysis methods. In these studies, the frequency of the presence of an analytical unit, such as a word, a term, and (in more advanced forms) a theme in the text is counted. These studies are based on the assumption that the frequency of more than one unit indicates its importance and position in the target text. As a result of this approach, the components of the text are analyzed separately and not in relation to each other.

In a study by Amin Dehghan and Parirokh (2003: 26) entitled "Content Analysis of Storybooks Suitable for Children with a Bibliotherapy Approach", researchers reviewed and analyzed 460 stories out of 423 suitable storybooks selected by the Children's Book Council between 1991-1993. This research has examined the frequency of the components of each variable to identify stories that can be used to reduce aggression, strengthen self-confidence, and reduce fear and sadness. In other words, the frequency of components in each story determines the response rate of the stories to each of the variables related to psychological problems. The study found out that 157 titles effectively reduced four psychological issues: aggression, low self-confidence, fear, and sadness.

Geranpayeh (2000) in "Discourse Analysis of Cultural Patterns of the Books Published by the Center for Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents", by studying and analyzing 72 stories, concludes that 69 stories from the collection under review contain a message. The message is explicitly conveyed in 31 stories and implicitly referenced in 41. Abdoli (2003) classified the books published in 1376-

1380 based on the type of story (fictional, animal story, social story) using the method of content analysis and It was concluded that fictional stories, with 1,566 titles, ranked first; animal stories, with 1,302 titles, ranked second; and social stories, with 629 titles, ranked third. Sattari (1998) has investigated social concepts in children and adolescent stories. The results show that the concepts of ethics and social behavior account for 28.1%, the concept of family for 26%, occupational groups for 17.7%, social trends for 13.9%, social places for 8.7%, and social problems for 5.6% of the total concepts. Hosseini Nesar (2000) in his thesis has examined the concepts related to the Islamic revolution in Iran, in the stories for children and adolescents and the results indicate that demonstrations had a frequency of 39, arrests of 15, and declarations and martyrdom with a frequency of 14 are the most frequent.

Tarqi Khah (2008) conducted a quantitative and statistical analysis of the concept of culture and the representation of peace in children's storybooks. The findings revealed that the term *'political system'* appeared most frequently, with a total of 139 occurrences followed closely by "glory, greatness, and beauty," which was mentioned 130 times. In contrast, the concept of peace was referenced in only 12 works.

In addition to the above researches which have tried to investigate the frequency of research topics using quantitative content analysis, limited studies have been done on qualitative content analysis, and most of these researches are focused on psychological issues. One notable research effort in this field is Hossein Sarfi's thesis (2001) titled "Review of the Adolescents Novel in Iran," which analyzes forty novels by thirty-five authors. The findings of this research identify twelve key characteristics that define the adolescents novel. They include, considering adolescents as the main audience of thes estories, the inclusion of at least one teenage main character, an emphasis on fostering a sense of responsibility within the community, promoting solidarity among peers, stimulating adolescents' imagination, and high educational value without overtly dictating direct instruction.

In the study entitled "Examination of Critical Thinking Skills in Selected Persian Teenage Novels of the 1380s based on Peter Facione's Framework," Omidinia et al. (2013) analyzed twelve novels for adolescents using a qualitative content analysis approach. This analysis is grounded in Facione's identified critical thinking

skills, encompassing interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. The findings indicate that the skill of interpretation was the most frequently utilized, whereas the skill of evaluation was the least employed within these novels. The authors assert that their findings suggest that if ordinary stories possess a suitable level of literary quality, they can effectively serve as educational tools.

In the research entitled "Evaluation of Psychological Methods of Teaching Self-confidence in Iranian Children's Stories", Vahid Khodaei Majd (2016) has analyzed 141 stories of age groups "B" and "C" deploying content analysis by drawing a matrix. This matrix displays ways to strengthen self-confidence that comes from the reviewed stories. The study's results indicate that Iranian stories employ various psychological methods to strengthen children's self-confidence, and the most important ones are strengthening positive thinking, strengthening self-esteem, developing a sense of identity, developing creativity, helping self-knowledge and self-acceptance, reducing feelings of inferiority and moderation.

Since texts are considered a part of social reality, the necessity of using qualitative text analysis research, whose purpose is to deeply understand the characteristics and meanings of the text and to identify the way of constructing reality and constructing patterns of meaning in practice, was brought up (Lichman 2006: 62). Therefore, adopting the qualitative content analysis approach is one of the main differences between this study and previous studies. In a way, the main strength of this study is the qualitative content analysis using the inductive approach. It has tried to extract the effective categories and components in the content of the children's fiction literature from the texts and presente them in the form of categorized classes and subclasses.

Methodology

The current study was conducted using qualitative content analysis. From the perspective of the study's purpose, it is classified as an applied research. The study adopts an inductive approach and employs the interview method for data collection. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with subject experts, authors, and key informants.

A total of 15 people were interviewed in this study. The interview process continued until data saturation was achieved. Although saturation was reached after twelve interviews, three additional interviews were conducted to enhance the verifiability of the findings. Using content analysis, we extracted the challenges faced in children and adolescent fictions in Iran from the interview texts. These were then presented as main components, sub-components, and semantic units.

Finding

After documenting the interviews, semantic units were extracted as codes, which were then grouped and categorized. Initially, 186 codes were collected. After removing duplicates, the total number of codes decreased to 117. Finally, by merging and combining the codes, the final number reached 48. These 48 codes were classified into five main components and 24 sub-components (Table.1).

Table 1. Components and sub-components of content challenges in children and adolescents' fiction - extracted from interviews.

Semantic Units	Sub-Components	Components
Translated Stories	Influencing	The suitability of the content of some translated works with the cultural, social and religious identity of Iranian children.
	The Desire of Adolscent	The interest of adolscents in translated stories is due to the boldness of foreign authors in writing and presenting topics.
Content Production	Self-censorship	Writers' use of rhetoric to express sensitive issues.
	Contradictions and differences	Consistency of expectations from life with the realities in Iran in authored works.
	The role of content	Changing the role of the book from story to education and adopting an educational and didactic approach.
	Audience preferences	Attention to the identity and needs of the audience.
	The world of the audience	Limiting some writers to the world of their childhood and adolescence and forgetting the audience today.
	Creativity	The prominence of the educational aspects in children and adolescents' literature and its effect on creativity.
	Advice	Adolescent saturation with elders' advice and unwillingness to hear and repeat them in stories.
	Imitation	Using foreign stories instead of creating native subjects.
	Historical Gap	Focus on the past and the memories of previous generations instead of communicating with today's adolscents.

Author or Authorship	Knowledge, Information, and Awareness	The importance of being aware of culture, legends, and myths and the need for knowledge in various fields in writing for adolscents.
	Select The Subject	Subject limitation and writers' challenges in choosing topics to write about.
	Identification	Reducing the attractiveness of authored works due to the audience's lack of identification with the author's concerns.
The Role of Governance	Audit	The impact of audit and censorship on the freedom of writers and themes of stories.
	Supervision	The inadequacy and inaccuracy of supervision in areas of literature and publishing.
	Literary Criticism	literary criticism in the field of adolscent's literature.
	Limitations	Restrictions on expressing certain social issues such as love.
	Didactic Approach	The role of government institutions in supporting the didactic approach in fiction.
Social and Cultural Conditions of Society	Study and Social Influencing	Reading frequency in society and the influence of literature in society.
	The Mentality Of Society	Preference of foreign works of literature over Iranian works.
	Writing Conditions	The low income of a writing job despite the need for a lot of time and concentration to write.
	Selection Criteria	Families prioritize discount rate and attractive illustrations over content quality.
	Publishers' Criteria	Publishers' preference for publishing works by well-known authors over other authors.

DISCUSSION

The content analysis of the interview texts showed the challenges of children's fiction literature in five main components, these components are 1- translated stories; 2- content production; 3- Author or Authorship; 4- The role of governance; 5- social and cultural conditions of society.

Translated Stories

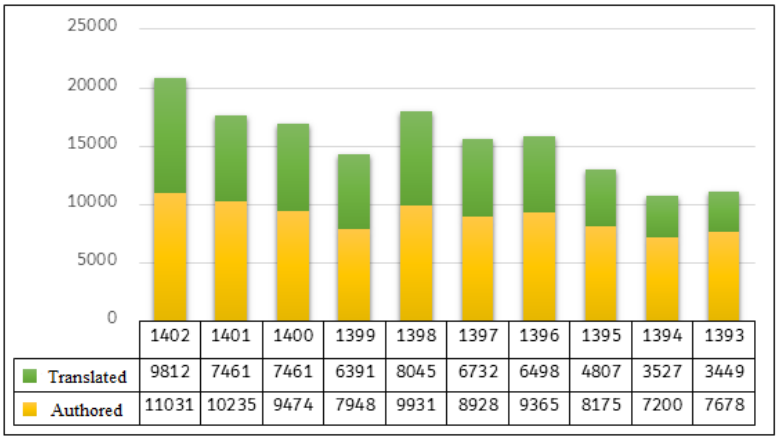
In all languages, translation is a way of communicating with other cultures and peoples of the world. It is the gateway to getting to know the myths and legends of other nations and the road to sharing a new attitude towards the environment and the way of living. However, it is not without problems, especially for the age group of children and adolscents, the translation of fiction is associated with challenges.

The origin of the translation of children's literary works into Persian should be sought in the period of increasing interaction between Iranians and Westerners,

especially since the constitutional period. The fact is that following the political, economical, and social developments in Iran, especially after the Second World War and with the expansion of urbanization and literacy, the process of translating fiction and non-fiction works from the European languages such as French, German and English into Persian for Iranian children and adolescents increased. Especially after the coup of 19th August of 1953 and Iran's close relationship with English-speaking countries, the translation of children's works was also affected (cf. Mousavi et al. 2007: 124).

This rapid trend continues, and hundreds of works about children and adolescents are translated into Persian every year. Many translators of children's stories mistakenly believe that translating these stories is easy due to their brief length and limited vocabulary. As a result, they attempt to translate children and adolescent stories into Persian. While these translations are often well-received by the audience and have been reprinted (cf. Emam 2014: 112), the assumption that the process is simple is not entirely accurate.

A review of the statistics of the publication of translated books for children and adolescents during the last ten years of 1393-1402, based on the statistical reports of Iran Bookstore, shows that in recent years, the frequency of books translated into Persian has been increasing compared to authored books. The publication of translated works has increased significantly in the last five years. In 1402, approximately 48% of the printed books were translations, while this statistic for 1393 was about 28% (Figure 1).



	1402	1401	1400	1399	1398	1397	1396	1395	1394	1393
Translated	9812	7461	7461	6391	8045	6732	6498	4807	3527	3449
Authored	11031	10235	9474	7948	9931	8928	9365	8175	7200	7678

Figure (1) - The number of authored and translated books, between 1393-1402.

(the House of Books and Literature of Iran)

Regardless of how many translated books are published each year—an analysis of which is beyond the scope of this study—it is important to note that foreign fiction is shaped by the culture of its society. The translation of certain elements from these works may have negative effects on young readers in the destination country.

The importance of this issue requires translators' and publishers' attention when publishing translated works. Unfortunately, despite the critical importance of this matter, comprehensive research on the content of translated works is lacking. Moreover, a small number of studies that have been done have focused on the format and presentation of these works, indicating a need for in-depth research in this area (Mohammadi 2012: 121). The incompatibility of the content of foreign works with some aspects of the cultural, social, and religious identity of Iranian children is one of the challenges pointed out to in the present study.

In certain translated stories, the child finds him/herself in an environment that is very different from one's own cultural background, creating a sense of duality within him/her. In some instances, the audience responds to this ambivalence by accepting and embracing the culture of others.

> Children are attracted to translated books. These books are created for children who live in that environment and culture (abroad), which is very different from our traditional environment and culture. Children often experience duality and hidden anger, feeling disconnected from their society and adults. (p.9[1])

Although children and adolescents become familiar with the beliefs, cultures, and attitudes of children from other nations and gain a broad understanding of the world around them through translation, and with this knowledge, they can better interact and communicate with other people in other countries in the future, it is crucial to approach translation for this age group with care due to their vulnerability. Translated books make up a large percentage of Iran's bookmarkets. Much Western culture has penetrated our publishing market and children and young adult literature through translated books in recent years. (p. 13)

The second challenge in this area is adolescents' interest in translated stories due to the boldness of foreign authors in writing and presenting the subject matter. Books with captivating titles cover designs, and attractive illustrations that do not

1. P. 9 means the ninth participant in interviewee.

have much harmony or conformity with our society and values have entered the market, and this has caused a change in tastes in the selection of books for children and adolescents (cf. Kheiry 2021). Given the interest of these readers in translated literature, it is anticipated that the trend of translation will continue to grow, presenting new challenges in the content of fiction for children and adolescents.

> Children and adolescents are much more interested in translated stories. Foreign authors are more daring in writing stories for children and adolescents, and they have become much closer to the world of children and adolescents today. Foreign authors write in line with the interests, desires, and psychological characteristics of children and adolescents, and they choose a simple language to write to have the necessary emotions in their works that can attract a adolescent to the story. (p. 7)

Content Production

Children and adolescents' literature should not only provide enjoyment to the audience but also have to offer rich content for developing their personality. Themes of this literature should be in line with the audiences' emotions and feelings, curiosities and experiences, and This is where the distinction between children's literature and adults' literature becomes evident.. In such works, the criterion of value is not only the transmission of documented, correct, and accurate information; rather, the choice of theme and the way of creatively designing and using information is what puts these works in the category of literary works (cf. Ghezel Ayagh 2004: 50). The more the content of the book resonates with the concerns of its audience, particularly adolescents, and aligns with their current life experiences, the more successful it will be in capturing their interest. Concepts in children's literature should be presented in a simple, fluent, and beautiful manner. Many valuable themes are poorly conveyed due to ineffective expression.The audience should gradually learn how to live in society and interact with their fellow human beings through the works they read. (cf. Firouzi Moghadam et al. 2019: 89).

One of the reasons why these young audiences are so fond of translated works is the courage, boldness, and freedom of foreign authors in choosing the subject and theme. Domestic authors, fearing censorship from the publisher and

relevant authorities, self-censor the content in advance, bypassing many topics and experiences of real life wchich could be reflected in the story, or ultimately having to do with a fleeting reference without elaborating the topic. This situation prevents the audience from recognizing real life in the works they read; this makes it difficult for them to see themselves reflected in these works, thereby hindering the development of a meaningful connection. In purely educational and didactic themes, instead of paying attention to the needs of the audience, writers in this field create works solely to prepare and educate them. Writing such works which are purely educational and cccontrived and lacking in pleasurable elements will not be very in line with the tastes of the audience (cf. Firouzi Moghadam et al. 2019: 82).

> Unfortunately, stories are disappearing in our society. We are moving towards a direction where books have become a means of education, and this is causing a distance from stories. Of course, the educational approach and learning from books will be very useful; however, gradually moving books towards an instructive and didactic perspective and seeing the child as an ignorant being is one of the disadvantages of focusing solely on stories for education. (p. 4)

In ancient literature, there was no such thing as an audience called a child; rather, children were allowed to read some of the works of adults. The adults' approach to the world of children was one-sided and educationally refined. In their view, a child is an incomplete adult and an adult is a completed child (cf. Firouzi Moghadam et al. 2019: 86).

Today's children and adolescents are far removed from their previous peers. Science and knowledge advance and expand at an exponential rate, and the rate of change in humans, especially children and adolescents, is in line with it. The expansion of mass communication tools and increased awareness has been changing the way individuals view themselves and the world; it has increased the capacity to challenge beliefs once considered definite and correct. Attention to the concerns, interests, and tastes of the audience, along with attention to the audience's world, were among the issues that all participants in the research emphasized.

> Do the issues raised in this literature correspond to the needs and concerns of adolescents or not? Especially in our literature, where many issues are still unresolved, such as the issue of love or sexual issues, which adolescents based

> on their age naturally pay attention to. (p. 11)
>
> If we identify children's needs, we can adjust the content we give them based on their needs. (p. 14)
>
> Sometimes, the author of a teenage novel seems to be depicting his past world here, and this has no connection to the issues and concerns of today's adolescents. They write about their memories from when they were adolescents and think that the same issues are now facing today's adolescents. There is nothing wrong with using their past and experiences, but the point is that it should be very close to the world of today's adolescents, and it is better to see what issues today's adolescents are dealing with. (p. 3)

Family, school, and sometimes even the author himself, in the story, which is initially a work of art, seek education, advice, and counsel; something that the audience, especially the adolescent audience, avoids in any form. Writers should find more creative ways to address education.

> Direct advice, prejudice, and bias towards the subject, as well as the attempt to convey the desired result to the reader along with advice and slogans, are common problems in stories (Mohammadi 2010: 96).
>
> We are very interested in giving advice and counsel to children and adolescents, and we do not pay attention to the fact that on television, in schools, and even among parents, everyone is giving advice, giving a direct message. When we give a direct message and advice, we dont encounter the children's and adolescent's subconscious, and they reject this. If we are going to say something or give information, if we are going to tell children about a moral-social issue, it must be indirect. (p. 15)

Author or Authorship

The adolescent audience has unique physical and psychological traits; psychologists note that they also experience distinctive mental and psychological development. It is essential for a writer targeting adolescents to understand their distinct mental and emotional states, as these differences set their fiction apart from children's literature. Children and adolescent writers must know the world of the audience. On the onehand, familiarity with psychological issues and the characteristics of the mental

and psychological development of each age group will help the writer to create an appropriate work. On the other hand, familiarity with culture and subcultures, national and ethnic legends, and myths will open a wider perspective for the writer.

> Adolescents at this age have many physical, mental, and psychological needs that require growth and change, so it is best to respond to these needs in stories written for this age group. The stories written address and answer the philosophical, religious, social, cultural, and other questions of adolescents. Their biological concerns and physical needs should be explained and discussed, and from a psychological perspective, it is also better to address the issues of self-esteem, identity, acceptance of oneself and others, sociability, recognition of oneself and others, and respect for differences in stories for this age group. Fantasy and educating adolescents about myths, legends, and beliefs of the nation can also be popular and exciting topics for adolescents. (p. 8)

In addition to these challenges, the author also faces some difficulties in choosing the subject. Many issues related to children, especially adolescents, are related to unresolved issues, for example, adolescents think about death, the collapse of structures, about love and the opposite sex but the author cannot freely focus on or speak about these issues. Referring to problems like this, Aghajani writes: "There are limitations in content, limited representation of gender roles, and little attention to sensitive issues in this area, which require serious attention from writers and publishers" (Aghajani 2019: 51). As a result, the audiences do not find their true selves in the story, and are not attracted to it. The author's concerns do not create empathy in them.

> Unfortunately, in Iran, we have many red lines and we don't allow our adolescents to face the whole of life. We make choices for them, which is wrong. We shouldn't make choices for them, we should tell them all aspects of real life. (p. 2)

Another challenge in the field of writing is the decline in the appeal of written works, often caused by the audience's inability to relate to the author's concerns—an issue which, if effectively addressed, could serve as a valuable platform for conveying educational and moral themes. The story is a suitable platform for teaching morality

and emotional impact due to its emotional and imaginary atmosphere as well as adventures and characterizations. Both phonetics and the child's self-identification are one of the effective methods in fiction literature for teaching morality (cf. Bagheri and Khosravi 1999: 99).

> In today's children and adolescents' stories, "anti-heroes" are constantly being created. Why? So that children and adolescents can communicate with them.. These characters, along with their strengths and abilities, children are on the path of "self-discovery" also these characters have weaknesses. Naturally, when a teenager sees that this character is not a so-called superhero, it is easier for them to communicate with him. (p. 10)

The Role of Governance

The government's role in overseeing children and adolescents' fiction is significant and complex, with deep social, cultural, and political implications. It can influence the content of this literature both directly and indirectly. One of the most significant effects of government is content control and censorship. In many countries, governments may monitor certain topics and prohibit the publication of books with critical or unconventional content. This can lead to a limitation in the diversity of topics and ideas (cf. Hunt, 2005: 52). In addition to government censorship and auditing, authors and publishers also practice self-censorship when writing and publishing content.

> We have several types of censorship. One is censorship where the author himself does, based on the conditions of society; because he knows if he doesn't do this, he will not get permission to publish, so he censors himself. The second censorship is also carried out by the publisher, and they remove some scenes. The third censorship is carried out by Ershad based on its criteria. (p. 6)

The unclear and inaccurate nature of supervision and auditing in the field of children's literature is another challenge in this field. The experts who participated in this study were almost entirely opposed to the complete elimination of supervision over the publication of children and adolescent books, but they also considered the current trend undesirable and harmful.

Governments can use children and adolescents' literature as a tool to promote their values and social norms. Stories can help convey moral and cultural messages

which are in line with the political and social goals of the government. In discussing the role of government in children and adolescent's fiction, the importance of writers' attention to social and cultural issues is one of the important issues mentioned by most experts and specialists. Literature can act as a tool for social change. Writers can use their stories to criticize the current conditions and provide solutions to social problems. The participants in the present study believed that, although literary criticism in Iran is developing, it remains insufficient. Given the increasing number of books being written and translated, there is a growing need for criticism that employs diverse and innovative approaches.

> These same criticisms and different perspectives that are being put forward are causing a stir. Some are creating work more consciously and are also communicating with a teenage audience: so on one side there is communication with the adult research community and on the other side the author is communicating with the audience. (p. 12)

Governments can influence the educational content and literature taught in schools. This can lead to the formation of children and adolescents' attitudes and beliefs about society and the world around them. In the education-oriented approach to children and adolescents' literature, the goal is to establish a connection with the audience to educate and create a relatively long-lasting and sustainable change in them (cf. Khosronejad 2003: 133).

Followers of this idea believe that children and adolescents' literature is educational. Officials and policymakers in the field of children and adolescent literature should always pay attention to the fact that addressing purely educational topics without considering the interests of the audience will not have constructive results; therefore, it is important to consider the aesthetic aspects of the text and to create a sense of enjoyment for the audience. The content of children's works should not only provide enjoyment to the audience but also have rich content in line with the development of their personality (cf. Saghir et al. 2021: 84).

> Many publishers and government institutions support books whose authors are better known or who create themes that suit their desires. This means that the published books are not high-quality works and are not worth reading. (p. 5)

Social and Cultural Conditions of Society

The relation between social development and reading is reciprocal. A more advanced society tends to exhibit higher reading frequencies, while increased reading contributes to that society's intellectual and cultural growth. If a society can somehow turn reading into a "value," it will have an impact on this two-way process. What everyone agreed on was that the first step and our first challenge is to get children and adolescents to read books, enjoy them, and become readers.

> Today the main issue in our society is that peruseis not a habit for children. They do not read books, and the overall reading level in our country is very low. We say that if they read a low level book, but read and understand the joy of reading, there will be hope that they will read good books in future; but if they don't read there is no hope. (p. 1)

These days, children and adolescents face social problems from a young age and sometimes are affected by them. There are issues such as child labor, poverty, addiction, various types of psychosis, etc. Even if children themselves and their families are not involved with these issues, they still face these issues in society or social media.

> I emphasize that today's adolescents are in contact with a lot of media, with a lot of translated books. These criticisms that many issues should not be raised in translated books lest they be harmed, do not make sense to me. Adolescents are exposed to the media and are seeing everything, in addition, their thinking is also being completed, so there is nothing wrong with discussing any issue as long as it is not subject to censorship and auditing. Not only does it not harm, but it opens a new sight in their mind that they can then complete in their mind with the passage of time and experience. (p. 8)

There is a belief that foreign goods are superior to domestic products, and this perception is also evident in the realm of books. Often, buyers and readers prefer translated works over those written by local authors.

> There is a mentality regarding the purchase of foreign goods, which is particularly prevalent among adolescents in schools. One of their points of pride is that they do not read Iranian books. If we can change this fundamental mentality, positive outcomes will follow. (p. 13)

Another major challenge in the process of producing books for children and adolescents is the poor status of writing as a profession. Writing in Iran is not recognized as a profession that generates income. The experts involved in this study, particularly the authors, emphasized that one of the primary challenges in the field of children and adolescent fiction is that publishers tend to favor established authors over newcomers and first-time writers. In addition to creating problems in providing living expenses for writers, this also prevents the recognition of real talents in this field.

> Writing a novel requires significant time and focus, allowing you to concentrate solely on the act of writing. Many of Iranian writers often struggle with low salaries and frequently take on additional jobs to make a living. For many, writing is a secondary or even tertiary job, making it challenging for them to devote the necessary time, focus, and effort to their writing occupation. Unfortunately, this is why there are often fewer high-quality works compared to mediocre or weak ones. (p. 4)

Many publishers tend to support works by well-known authors or those whose themes align with their personal preferences. As a result, the books that reach adolescents are often of low quality and lack literary value, which contributes to their rejection by young readers.

Conclusion

Children and adolescent literature in Iran is growing and developing despite its being still in infancy. All interviewees agreed that children and adolescent literature has grown rapidly in quantity and quality, especially in the past ten years. However, there are still challenges on its way to maturation. The challenges identified by this study derived from the opinions of authors and experts. They can be solved if attention paid by the government institutions, publishers, researchers, as well as the authors themselves, parents, and educators.While they also present challenges, translated works offer a valuable opportunity to engage children and adolescents in reading.

In terms of content, taking into account the identity, concerns, tastes, and interests of the audience—and engaging with their contemporary world rather than focusing on the past or the childhood and adolescence of previous generations—

can help foster empathy in today's readers. Literary works should reflect real life accurately, and authors are encouraged to write boldly on contemporary topics, prioritizing elements of enjoyment and creativity in their literary productions. If they also intend to present educational concepts, they should abandon stereotypes and act more creatively.

There are gaps between every two subsequent generations, but the rapid pace of scientific progress and the increase in communication in various contexts has turned this gap between the new and old generations into a notable rupture. To overcome this gap of knowledge about the new generation, the writer has to be more in touch with the young audience, and try to know them. He/she must recognize and appreciate their language, thoughts, and concerns, which are different from those of the autohr's generation. Children and adolescents must see fiction as a mirror of real life and their thoughts, desires, and emotions to go along with it.

It is necessary to revise the methods of monitoring the publishing market. All the authors and researchers participating in this study maintained that the types of monitoring, auditing, and censorship prevailing in the publishing market are damaging and inappropriate. A situation that causes self-censorship by the author eliminates part of the reality and what remains appears artificial and unreal. Government institutions should take measures to support, introduce, and promote works that have a higher literary and artistic quality and include them in textbooks.

The results of this research show that if writers of children and adolescents' literature follow the principles of storytelling and observe elements of fiction properly, using native subjects in all genres, even the horror genre, as well as avoiding explicit didacticism of the traditional children's literature, they will create attractive stories for their audiences. In this way, the audience's and society's tastes and perspective will gradually change and they will demand literature of greater quality. High quality literature will be influential in helping future generations create a better tomorrow for the society and the country.

It can be concluded that in general, the conditions of children and adolescent fiction in Iran are evolving even though there is a need to pay more attention to the challenges mentioned above. Authors and publishers should listen carefully to the needs of children and adolescents and improve their works in order to be able

to communicate with their audiences more effectively. The analysis of the opinions of experts in the field of children and adolescents literature showed that, despite the fact that the number of copies of books published in the field of children and adolescents in the country is increasing, there are numerous challenges in this field. The challenges discussed in various areas such as the content of works, the role of governance, writing, and translated works require careful attention, planning, and policy-making of the major authorities. Considering the intergenerational role of adolescents in receiving and transmitting social and cultural concepts, etc., lack of attention can bring about numerous cultural and social challenges in the future.

Note: (This article is extracted from Elham Zamani's doctoral thesis entitled "Structural and Content Criteria of Children and Adolescents' Fiction".)

* Thanks to those who helped with this research by participating in interviews: Ms. Laleh Atashi; Mr. Amozadeh Khalili; Dr. Ramin Mohrami; Mr. Mostafa Rahmandoost; Mr. Hamidreza Shahabadi; Mr. Mohamadreza Shams; Mr. Mahmud Baraabadi, Ms. Marjan Fuladvand; Dr. Maryam Jalali; Ms. Zahra Asadi, Dr. Mahdavi; Mr. Houshang Moradi Kermani; Mr. Ahmad Akbarpour; Ms.Sedghi and … .

Thesis Declaration

This article is based on the author's PhD dissertation entitled "Structural and Content Criteria for Children's Fiction" completed under the supervision of Dr. Mahmud Fazilat in the field of Persian Language and Literature at the University of Tehran.

Funding Statement

No financial support was received for the preparation or publication of this article.

AI Use Declaration

The use of artificial intelligence was limited exclusively to language editing and proofreading. All stages of the research process, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation, were conducted independently by the authors.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to the Editor-in-Chief, members of the Editorial Board, and respected reviewers of the journal for their valuable comments, constructive suggestions, and academic guidance throughout the review and publication process of this article.

References

Aghajani, Zahra (2019). "A study of the content challenges of children and young people's fiction in Iran." *Quarterly Journal of Children's Literature Studies*, 9:33, pp. 45-62. (In Persian)

Amin Dehghan, Nasrin; Parirokh, Mehr. (2003). "Content analysis of story books suitable for children in the "B" age group with a bibliotherapy approach." *Library and Information Quarterly*, 24, pp. 19-53. (In Persian)

Anvari, Hassan (2003). *Farhange Sokhan (Sokhan encyclopedia (.*Vol. 2, Tehran: Sokhan. (In Persian)

Bagheri, Khosrow; Khosravi, Zohreh (1999). "A new look at the Islamic concept of education and training*." Religious Thought*, 16. (In Persian) 10.22099/JRT.2013.1359

Benjamin, Walte (2006*). One-Way Street*. Translated by Hamid Farazandeh, Tehran: Markaz. (In Persian)

Daad, Sima (2006). *Encyclopedia of Literary Terms*. 3rd ed. Tehran:Morvarid Publications. (In Persian)

Daneshpour, A. (2016). "Content challenges of fiction literature for children and adolescents in Iran." *Journal of Literary Studies*, 6:4, pp. 33-48. (In Persian)

Emam, Abbas (2014). "Translating Children's Literature into Persian: The Challenge of Tone." *Language and Translation Studies*, 47:1, pp. 105-122. (In Persian) https://doi.org/10.22067/lts.v47i1.42893.

Firouzi Moghadam, Mahmoud; Alavi Moghadam, Mahyar; Saghir, Alirez. (2019). "A Critical Look at the Collection of Children's Works." *Two Quarterly Journals of Research in Children and Adolescent Literature*, 1, pp. 77-90. (In Persian)

Garanpayeh, Behrouz (2000). "Discourse Analysis of Cultural Patterns in the Books of the Center (Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents)." *Children's Literature Research Journal*, 5, pp. 18-3. (In Persian)

Ghezel Ayagh, Soray. (2004). *Children and Adolescent Literature and the Promotion of Reading*. Tehran: Samt. (In Persian)

Hafezi, Alirez. (2003). "Children's literature is a gradual literature." *Research Journal of Children and Adolescent Literature*, 26, pp. 3-13. (In Persian)

Hosseini, Seyed Mohamma. (2001). "History of Children and Adolescent Fiction in Iran." *Journal of Literary Criticism*, 12;2, pp. 78-91. (In Persian)

Hosseini Nesar, Hossei. (2000). *The Islamic Revolution of Iran in the Mirror of Children and Adolescent Stories (1978-1998)*, Library and Information Sciences, Science and Research Branch of Islamic Azad University. Ph.D. dissertation. Tehran. (In Persian)

Hunt, Peter (1996). *International Companion Encyclopedia Of Children's Literature*. edition of 2005 by Taylor and Francis. e-book:

https://www.google.com/books/edition/International_Companion_Encyclopedia_of/7doBUwzbWh4C?hl

Kheiry, Ahma (2021). The Harms of the Lack of Supervision over Translated Children's Books and Adolescents' Literature, retrieved on 25/5/1403 Access link:

https://www.mehrnews.com/news/525297. (In Persian)

Khodaei Majd, Vahid (2016). "Evaluation of psychological methods of teaching self-confidence in Iranian children's stories." *Scientific-Research Journal of Education and Evaluation*, 33, pp. 137-158. (In Persian)

Khosronejad, Morteza (2003). "Characteristics and Issues of Philosophy of Children's Literature". Journal of *Social and Human Sciences, Shiraz University*, 20:1, pp.122-135.

Mastour, Mostafa (2013). *The Basics of the Short Story*. Markaz: Tehran. (In Persian)

Mirsadeghi, Jamal (2002*). Fiction Literature*. Sokhan: Tehran. (In Persian)

Mirsadeghi, Jamal (2007). *Elements of Fiction*. Sokhan: Tehran. (In Persian)

Mohammadi, Mehdi (2010). *A Study of Religious Concepts in Children and Adolescent Fiction Books in Iran between 1385-1380.* Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Islamic Azad University, Science and Research Branch. Ph.D. dissertation. Tehran. (In Persian)

Mohammadi, Mehdi (2012). "A Study of the Quality of Children and Adolescent Religious Fiction Published between 1380-1385. Content, Structure and Quality of language and expression." *Shiraz University Children's Literature Studies*, 3:1, pp. 109-135. (In Persian) https://doi.org/10.22099/jcls.2012.426

Mousavi, Fatemeh; Hadipour, Asghar; Samandari (2008). "The History of Children and Adolescent Literature in Iran." *Boostane Sokhan (Sokhan Garden)*, 11, pp. 119-137. (In Persian) JR_JCLS-1-2_007

Omidinia, Maryam; Maktabifard, Leila; Momeni, Esmat (2013). "A Study of Critical Thinking Skills in Selected Novels by Persian Adolescents in the 1980s based on Peter Fasione's List." *Thought and Child Journal, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 4:1, pp. 1-26. (In Persian)

Poladi, Kamal (2008). *A Review of the History of Children's Literature*. Tehran: Center for the Intellectual Development of Children and Adolescents. (In Persian)

Saffarzadeh, Ali Akbar (2011). *A Comparative Study of Children and Adolescent Literature in Iran and the World.* Samat: Tehran. (In Persian)

Saghir, Alireza; Firouzi Moghadam, Mahmoud; Jalali, Maryam; Alavi Moghadam, Mahyar (2001). "The Theory of "Audience-Centeredness" an Approach in Criticizing Children's Literature." *Persian Language Studies,* 11, pp. 71-88. (In Persian) 10.22034/JMZF.2022.364853.1128

Sarfi, Hossein (2001). *A Study of the Adolescent Novels in Iran*. Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabatabaei University. M.A. Thesis. (In Persian)

Sarshar, Mohammad Reza (2013). *About Fiction Literature, Fourth Edition of the*

Basics of Children's and Adolescent Literature, Tehran: Center for Young Thought. (In Persian)

Sattari, Mansoureh (1998). *Investigating Social Concepts in Real Stories Suitable for Adolescents Written by Iranian Authors in 1998-1999*, University of Tehran, Tehran. M.A. Thesis. (In Persian)

Shafiei Kadkani, Mohammadreza (2021). *Interview, available on the "Farhikhtegandaily" site* (In Persian):

https://farhikhtegandaily.com/news/81334.

Tafazzoli, Ahmad (1997). *History of Iranian Literature before Islam*, Edited by Jaleh Amoozgar, Tehran. (In Persian)

Tarqi Khah, Nayyereh (2009). *A Study of the Concept of Culture and the Place of Peace in Children's Books in Iran in the Years 1970-85*. Islamic Azad University, Tehran. M.A. Thesis. (In Persian)