

## IRANIAN LIFESTYLE REFLECTION IN SIX ADOLESCENT'S NOVELS

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**ABSTRACT:** *In most novels for teens in Iran, one or more major or minor characters of the story are adolescents who each have their own speech and behavior. It seems that the authors pay attention to Iranian life style in the novels primarily to draw attention of adolescents to the text and secondary to reflect Iranian life style in their text. In this paper, lifestyle of teenage characters in the text of teenage novels during 2010– 2012 based on the pattern of Iranian lifestyles is analyzed with regard to the four indexes (traditional, leisure, cultural and managerial-care). The findings of the content analysis show that all indexes of Iranian life style are noted in young adult novels, and the most attraction was directed to the traditional index. In addition, the use of indices between girls and boys is different in the novels.*

**KEYWORDS:** children's literature, adolescent, novel, Iran, lifestyle, gender

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### INTRODUCTION

Children literature allocates wide area of theories by authors like childhood concept, and it can be stated that every scholar defines this concept from his own point of view. But the common point of all existing definitions of children and teen literature can be inclusion of the term “children”. Literature works of this field are influenced by the child and its characteristics. Shahabadi maintains that presence of child and teen in literature can be imagined in two ways: subject and audience. There are many works with the child and its interests as the main subject. Children may read these works and enjoy their reading, and they may not read some others. Those works which are read by children are the works which consider children as their audience and addressee, and those works which are not read, have children only as their subject, and their readers are adults. But those works which address children neither as subject nor as audience contain topics interested and comprehensible by children and teens (Shahabadi, 2006, p. 24). To this end, according to Peter Hunt, children literature is composed of two concepts: literature and children. That is, the literary text as literature meets needs of the child in terms of “content” and “form”, and interaction occurs between the child and literature. Jalali believes that survival of identity of children and teen works is dependent on the audience. In general view, children and adolescents which use literary texts in

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order to spend their free times and meet individual and social needs are regarded as the main and real audience of children and teen literature (2013, p. 28). With beginning of adolescence period, attention of adolescents are more drawn by the surrounding world, communication with peers, attention to the community and social relations, responsibility for self, family, friends and fellow human beings and the emergence of the mental conditions to change the environment and participation in social activities, learning techniques and skills, a sense of belonging to peer groups, the spirit of membership in youth organizations are increased in them (Aghayari, 2010, p. 153). Children's literature consists of two concepts of literature and child and each one of these terms complete each other in this regard. Literal text should satisfy the child's requirements from both form and content point of view. Consequently, there is an interaction between child and literature. Any writing embracing such conditions is regard as child literature (Jalali, 2013, p. 42)

Based on the importance of audience in children and teen children and understanding adolescence period as the period when the adolescent is neither child nor adult, teens can have literature separate from children literature, which is specific to them and appropriate to their developmental grounds and needs. Hence, this literature can be defined as follows: teens literature is the literature which trains and educates teens and also helps them to distance from worries and preoccupations, to construct their specific character, and enhances their spirit so that they can look at the world with critical and logical vision, and literature turns into a medium between teens and the outside world.

Young adult novels includes a genre or collection of works that people look for it with the title of "adolescence". In other words, young adult novels is the work which creates textural capacities in it so that the reader finds his adolescence requirements (Sheykholeslami, 2010, p. 111). Reflection of life style can be observed in these novels. Life style is among those concepts which do not have accurate, comprehensive and inclusive definition, and there are controversies regarding its features and conditions. Common points in this concept with other concepts in humanities include culture, taste, and history of its inclusion (so that it includes all human life aspects and his social activities). Different views on the features, elements, and indexes of life style have caused that there are no consistent views regarding features of this concept and its definition. Considering that life style in young adult novels is to be investigated, firstly providing a definition of life style seems necessary. Giddens defines this concept as follows: life style is a relatively coherent collection of all behaviors and activities of a specific individual in the daily life, which requires a set of habits and orientation, thus it enjoys unity (Giddens, 2003, p. 121). Hajiyani defines this concept as follows: life style is applied on the collection of behaviors and patterns of actions of every person which is focused on normative and semantic aspects of social life, and represents the individual's beliefs and actions. Life style can be described and measured in all actions and behaviors of the person in interaction and communication with others, nature, and his surrounding social environment, which can be usually observed. Thus, life style includes objective and tangible aspects of the culture and value system of a society, and it represents visible part of the collective identity and cultural identity in a society (Hajiyani, 2012, p. 8). Johnson maintains this concept can be measured at international, national, regional and individual levels (Majdi, 2010, p. 113). Investigating life style of adolescents in Iranian young adult novels confine life style framework to the national level, but it still can provide an international pattern for the authors which intend to research on this subject in their own country.

### Indexes of Iranian Life Style

Rahmatabadi in his paper entitled “Foundation of social identity in late modernity” referred to indexes of Iranian life style:

1. Traditional Indexes: Traditional indexes included 6 major factors as family, gender, age, education, ethnicity, and job
2. Leisure Indexes: Activities which are done in free times. Leisure indexes are divided into leisure activities (trip, playing, communication with friends, sports, etc.) and leisure spaces (shopping centers, coffee shops, homes, parks, restaurants, etc.).
3. Care-Managerial Indexes: This index refers to behaviors related to the body, health preservation, and self-care against damages. For example, eating habits, clothing, appearances ... fall in this category.
4. Cultural Factors: Culture or civilization is a complex set which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and any other abilities that are acquired by human being as a member of society. In cultural indexes, extent of activeness or passiveness of the actor is considered. For example watching television, reading books, art activities, going to theater and cinema, music listening and ... fall into this category (Rahmatabadi, 2012, p. 192-196).

In this paper, it is attempted to study life style of teenager characters in the young adult novels during 2010 – 2013. Firstly a summary of the novels is given. Then, Iranian life style is analyzed based on four traditional indexes according to social sciences view. All teenager characters in the books, including major and minor characters, are investigated and analyzed, and life style is provided based on the indexes, and finally conclusion is given. Research area includes 6 popular novels of Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults which won prizes as novel in Iran. They include as follows: *Hasti* (Farhad Hasanzadeh), *When Moji Was Lost* (Hamidreza Shahabadi), *Romances of Jonah in Belly of Fish* (Jamshid Khanian), *Clown* (Hoda Haddadi), *Orange Hearts* (Mino Karimzad), and *First Day of Summer* (Siamak Golshiri).

The main research question is that how traditional indexes of Iranian life style are provided in Iranian teens novels.

With providing information and knowledge about life of Iranian adolescents, this research considerably helps creative authors who are active in teen literature area and can be efficient in children and teen literature field. In addition, it can help authors as an information source about life style of Iranian adolescents, and it provides grounds for the authors to compare traditional life style of today adolescents with the past and work in comparative studies. This information can be used for comparison in other countries.

### Orange Hearts

Summary of Story: Sadeh is a freestanding and simple girl who lives in a family of modest means; she has a good relationship with his father and is intimate to him. The story begins with the arrival of a new student at school classroom in the name of Alma. While Sadeh’s father is not high in terms of economic level, but she has a warm- hearted family. But Alma is from a wealthy family with one child who lives with his mother. She is in the search for her father. Thus, she meets a man who claims to know Alma’s father and tries to reach her to her father. Finally Alma realizes that the man has deceived her.

Analysis: This book contains six teenager characters. Sadeh and Alma, as the main characters, and Sheyda, Pari, Sahar, and Zahra as the minor characters of the story. Life style of major characters in the story was more focused. Life style indexes in this story are classified into traditional, leisure, cultural, and care-managerial classes. After traditional index, leisure and cultural indexes have highest frequency, and managerial-care indexes is in the next rate, traditional indexes from sub-group of traditional indexes with criterion of verbal evidence (referring to the age) revealed that the characters are adolescents, and sixteen years of age is their approximate and shared age; Most cultures agree that boys are active, and independent and girls are kind, dependent (Hoseini Nasab, 1993, p. 19). According to the gender index, major and minor characters of the story are female, and no male teenager was observed in the story. According to educational index, the characters pass educational grades. Family texture is manifested in two forms: adolescents living with the parents and single-parent families. Out of six characters of the story, five cases live with the parents and one case lives in single-parent family (living with her mother). Leisure index indicates that most free time of adolescents is spent in communicating with friends, and then their major leisure activities include resting. Leisure space of adolescents was mostly home and then street and coffee shops. Cultural index showed that adolescents play active role in performing such affairs as art activities (writing and acting), going to cinemas and theaters, reading books and watching TV. Since cultural activities have been in free times of adolescents, they are categorized as leisure indexes. Nutrition management indicates that adolescents are interested in eating fast foods like fried potato and sandwich as well as refreshments like fruit leather. Selecting girls as the major character of the story and assigning active, decision maker, adventurous, and savior role for them is the first step for leaving aside gender stereotypes taken place by the writer. Female characters in the story constitute the dominant characters. Smoking by a girl is one of the prominent abnormalities and stereotypes in this story. The highest communication of adolescents in this novel is communication among peers, and they are mostly influenced by their peers.

### **First Day of Summer**

Summary of Story: With the end of exam season and beginning summer, Kamyar, as the main character of story, goes to the people who are not related to him and he is not aware of their features and characteristics. Although a good friend named Hamed guides him to stay away from these people; however, no Kamyar does not pay attention to Hamed, because he hates being ordered. Kamyar trusts these people quickly and describes life of his best friend, Pejman, who is from a rich family. Naser, which does not have a good face, along with his friend, Habib, plans to steal from the house of Pejman and they use Kamyar as a shield to achieve their demands. Kamyar resists; but, Naser and Habib threatens him. Kamyar is forced to accept their demands. Theft plan is done when there is no one in the house. When Kamyar enters the house of Pejman and is looking for things, he is stricken suddenly with astonished face of Pejman, and regretfully runs away without any hesitation. He chooses confinement at home and always blames himself for it.

Analysis: The book “First day of summer” has two teenage characters named Kamyar and Hamed. Kamyar is the main character and narrates the story and the story is told from his point of view. Hamed and Pejman are minor characters of the story. Life style indexes include traditional, leisure, cultural and managerial-care indexes. After traditional index, leisure index have highest frequency and managerial-care and cultural indexes have lowest frequency. Traditional indexes with criterion of verbal evidence (referring to the age) revealed that the characters are adolescents. According to

the gender index, characters of the story are male. According to educational index, the characters pass educational grades. Family texture is manifested in two forms: adolescents living with the parents and single-parent families. Leisure index indicates that most free time of adolescents is spent in communicating with friends, and then their major leisure activities include sport and resting. Leisure space of adolescents was mostly home, market, and coffee shops. At managerial index level, nutrition habits specified that adolescents are interested in eating ice cream and fast foods, and clothing management suggested that adolescents are interested in wearing branded clothes. Cultural index in this book indicates that cultural activities of adolescents originate from their free time, and they watch TV in these times. It is raised as leisure index too. Male characters of the story constitute dominant characters. Except for two cases, all characters are male in this story, and there is no female teenager actor in the story.

### **When Moji Was Lost**

Summary of Story: Mojdeh is 16 and Mojgan is 17 years old and they are cousins. They went on trip along with their families. Father, who has forgotten to take his medicines, blames Mojgan. The next day, Mojgan disappears. The family searches everywhere and it turns out that she was hiding in closet all the time. The family is enjoying her finding that Mojde disappears. After pursuits, it is found that she was kidnapped by one of her friends with the excuse of giving her to Mojgan. She is taken to a safe house. Criminals escape after an encounter with the police, but, because of the high speed, they have an accident and the spinal cord transection occurs for Mojde.

Analysis: This book has three teenager characters: Mojgan, Mojde, and Masoud. Life style indexes in this story are classified into traditional, leisure, and cultural indexes. After traditional index, leisure index has highest frequency and then there is cultural index. Traditional index with criterion of verbal evidence (referring to the age) revealed that the characters are adolescents, and they are between 15 – 17 years old. According to the gender index, girls were as the main story characters. According to educational index, the characters pass educational grades. Family texture is manifested in the form of adolescents living with the parents. Leisure index indicates that most free time of adolescents is spent in travelling, and then their major leisure activities include attending in leisure courses and communication with friends. Leisure space of adolescents is limited in this story and it is confined in one case (going to villa). Cultural index specified that adolescents have active role in performing art activities like watching TV, reading books, etc. considering these activities are performed in the free time of adolescents, it is also stated as leisure index too. Life style of girls compared to life style of boys shows that priority of teenage girls and boys is leisure activities. At cultural index level, girls are more active than boys in terms of cultural affairs, and they show more interest in performing cultural affairs compared to boys. Female characters against men constituted the dominant characters. In this novel, girls are isolated and withdrawn, emotional, tender heart, and easily deceived, and boys are curious, adventurous and logical.

### **Romances of Jonah in Belly of Fish**

Summary of Story: Sara is a 13 years old teenage girl who lives in Khoramshahr with her family. Her father repairs piano, and knows music well. Given long fingers of Sara, her father predicts a bright future for her in playing piano. Sarah grew up with music and a love of music, and loves her second-hand piano named Coco. When the father goes to Germany for passing a course the

war is started. Sara along with her mother and brother, Son, and her uncle, Ghazi, and his wife, Ongha go to Ahvaz. On the way, they encounter Jonah, a teenage boy, and Bibi, his grandmother. With intensification of bombing, they are forced to remove the piano from the van and pick up Jonah and Bibi. Sarah then has dual feeling toward Jonah. In the one hand, she is upset because she knows Jonah as the cause of the loss of her piano. At the same time, she is curious and even interested in him, furtively follows him and likes to know his friend. She learns much from him, and at the same time, she shows herself as indifference toward Jonah. Jonah is a little older than Sara, and has a strange behavior. He knows many things, he reads the poems, and has a beautiful look at the nature, music and love. When he is forced to work as well-digger to pay for his and his grandmother life. But he loses her life. Sara and Sam decides to go his favorite garden to inform Jonah death to his unseen friend. When Sara climbs up the wall with difficulty, she finds his poem notebook and finds out that she was the audience for his poems.

Analysis: This book has three teenager characters known as Sara, Sam, and Jonah. Following traditional index, leisure and cultural index have highest frequency, and care-managerial index is in the next level. According to traditional index it is specified that story characters are adolescents. According to the gender index, the main story character is girl, and its minor characters are two boys. According to educational index, the characters pass educational grades. Family texture is manifested in the form of adolescents living with the parents. In one case due to absence of parents, the actor lives with his grandmother. Leisure index indicates that most free time of adolescents is spent in leisure space of plains and home on playing and listening to music along with the family, and then their major leisure activities include playing instruments, writing poetry, and resting. Cultural index specified that adolescents have active role in performing art activities like playing music instruments, and writing poetry, reading books and magazines. Considering these activities are performed in the free time of adolescents, it is also stated as leisure index too. Care index specified that adolescents went to other city for securing their life against the war. Eating habit in only one case suggests that the teenage is interested in drinking tea and eating biscuit. Life style of girls versus life style of boys showed that priority of teenage girls and boys is leisure activities. At cultural index level, female actor was more active than boys in performing cultural activities, and is more interested than boys. Female characters against men constitute dominant characters.

### **Hasti**

Summary of Story: Hasti is story of a teenage girl which does not like to wear flowery skirts or have long hair like other girls, she does not like to play with dolls and stay at home. She likes to behave like the boys. Thus, it is the reason for constant struggle and conflict between Hasti and her father. With beginning of the war, their house collapses and they are forced to leave the city, because they do not have anything. Uncle of Hasti lends his motorcycle to her father so that they leave by it. He takes promise of her father to return the motorcycle as soon as possible. Hasti's father does not keep his promise despite of salvaging their life. Hasti is greatly upset for breaking promise by his father. Thus, one day she takes to motorcycle and goes to Abadan furtively and returns it to its owner.

Analysis: Hasti is the only teenage character in the book. Since she does not like to be girl, she mostly behaves as boys and it reflects that she has male life style. Leisure index specified that the actor generally spends free times on playing (male games) in leisure space of alleys and streets.

The other leisure activities of the teenager is riding motor, rafting, and resting. It can be inferred that leisure style of the teenager is mainly similar to the male leisure style. At managerial level, body management showed that the actor hates from anything which requires feminist like wearing female clothes, long hair, etc. and in turn, she enjoys very short razor haircut and wearing male clothes. Eating habits indicated that she is interested in ice cream and sunflower seeds. Cultural index specified that the teenager's cultural activities are in line with her leisure activities and they are mostly leisure type. She is active in such affairs as watching TV and listening to radio. Cultural index of taking gift from adults is stated as a passive role for actor in cultural aspect. In this story, the phenomenon of war, society's culture, and father's behavior cause creating different gender situation in Hasti's character, and her sexual identity is at odds with her physiology. In this novel, Hasti tends to male characteristics. In the community and the era in which the children are powerless and being female means having no sound, Hasti appeals to masculinity and earns more freedom with her male identity. Views physical strength and knowledge and emotions in the male character actor. A gender shift is observed in the behavior of the actor. There is unrealistic self and lack of coordination between behavior and feelings of the actor.

### **The Clown**

**Summary of Story:** This novel is about a period of life of a female student named Negar, who has come from another town to Tehran. One day she encounters a teenager girl in the bus who disturbed Negar with her behaviors. She slaps the girl and returns her home. But she looks for the girl because of feeling guilty. She furtively brings the girl to her house. Over the time Negar finds out that the teenage girl is from clowns' family, and according to the rules of clowns, she is responsible for the girl. After a while, this cryptanalysis is revealed and an intimate relationship is shaped among Negar, clown and Near's aunt. Other neighbors also accept the stranger girl over the time, and it causes occurrence of new events in the residential complex where Negar lives. Negar also gradually gets accustomed to the behaviors of girl, and feels attachment to her. At the end, Negar feels her absence after her departure.

**Analysis:** Clown novel has three teenager characters named Sepide (clown), Kimiya, and Kamelia. The story is told from Negar's point of view, which is a young girl. The novel mostly is focused on life style of the clown. Following traditional index, leisure and cultural indexes have highest frequency, and managerial – care index is in the next level.

According to age index from sub-classes of traditional indexes, with criterion of verbal evidence (referring to the age) it is revealed that the characters are adolescents, and they are between 11 – 17 years old. According to the gender index, major and minor characters of the story are female, and no male teenager was observed in the story. According to educational index, the characters pass educational grades. Family texture is manifested in two forms: adolescents living with the parents and living with others.

Leisure index indicated that most free time of adolescents is spent on playing and communicating with friends, and art activities like knitting, playing, and listening to music are other leisure activities. Cultural index indicated that adolescents are active in such affairs as reading books and magazines, soothsaying, and art activities (knitting, playing performance, etc.). Managerial index (body management) showed that adolescents show care for face make-up, hair dressing, and

wearing fashionable clothes. Their eating habits suggest that adolescents are interested in eating sweets especially ice cream, refreshments, and fast food. Choosing girls as the main story characters and assigning active and independent personality to her is the main step for leaving aside gender stereotypes. Female characters against males constitute dominant characters. The role of girls become less prominent in the society. Family is present in this novel, but it is not available, and the teenager lives independently, and builds up an independent identity.

## CONCLUSION

According to subclass of traditional index, gender index suggests that out of 18 adolescents found in these novels, 13 ones were female and 5 were males. Girls are the main character of story in all novels, and boys are minor characters, except for the novel "First Day of Summer" where the main character was a boy with no female character. At age index level, the age of adolescents is between 11 – 17 years old. Out of 18 adolescents, 7 adolescents in the novels are at the age of 16 years old. It can be inferred that authors and rites mostly write for this age group, and teen age in the novels under study was approximately 16. Education index denotes that all adolescents go to school and are educating. It results from important of the family and society of Iran, and going to school is compulsory. According to family criterion, out of 18 adolescents, 14 ones live with their parents, and are beside them. Three adolescents live with mother and grandmother, and one teenager lives independent from family or with others. The interesting point is that adolescents do not live with only the father in none novel, and they live with their mothers. The reason for living with mother in novels "First Day of Summer" and "Romances of Noah in Belly of Fish" is death of parents, and divorce in the novel "Orange Hearts". Following traditional indexes which are found in all characters of the stories, leisure index can be regarded as the most common index. Among leisure activities, the most common activities for adolescents include communicating with friends, sports, playing, and resting respectively. Leisure activity of girls was dominantly communicating with friends, and dominant leisure activity of boys is playing and sport. The most used leisure space for adolescents is home and street. Leisure space for girls is mostly home, and street and outside space for boys. At cultural index level, the most common cultural activities of adolescents was reading books, art activities, and watching TV. Often cultural activities of adolescents overlap with leisure activities. The interesting point is that girls are more active than boys in cultural affairs, and among cultural affairs, boys only watch TV. At managerial – care index level, nutrition management and paying attention to the appearance are in the priority. In investigation of managerial indexes, eating habits constitute considerable part. Favorite and enjoyable edible thing for all actors is ice cream, and it denotes that Iranian children and adolescents are interested in this edible, and rare people can be found that do not enjoy ice cream. The other tendency of adolescents is fast food, which unfortunately their life style has changed it compared to the past.

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