Dominant Culture in Iran's Primary School Textbooks: A Comparison between Individualism and Collectivism

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A R T I C L E I N F O	A B S T R A C T
	The present study aimed to evaluate cultural values and tendencies in Iranian primary school textbooks. This study used a comparative, descriptive approach employing content analysis for the interpretation of data. The study population consisted of five primary school "Gifts of Heaven" (Religious Instruction) textbooks, which were selected through targeted sampling. Two lists were used to code the content of the textbooks, one for individualistic-collectivistic values and the other for cognitive tendencies. Individualistic and collectivistic values were found in the studied textbooks, with collectivism being more prevalent. Self-direction and tradition were the most frequent components of individualism and collectivism, respectively, while stimulation and benevolence were the least frequent. The textbooks showed a balance between individualistic and collectivistic tendencies. The Individualistic and collectivistic categories were similarly distributed across grade levels, with greater prominence in textbooks for grades three to six. Lower grade levels, especially second grade, had a higher prevalence of collectivist elements compared to higher grades when examining the cognitive tendencies in the studied textbooks. The study reveals that Iranian "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks reflect a balanced representation of both individualistic and collectivistic values. This balance is crucial for fostering respect for diverse cultures among students and promoting their understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. The main recommendation is for Iranian curriculum planners to maintain this balance and prioritize incorporating educational materials that expose students to different perspectives for a more inclusive society.

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1. Introduction

Education encompasses more than just gaining knowledge and skills, it also serves as a tool for passing down cultural values and traditions from one generation to another. This is achieved through a curriculum that is reflective of the society's culture. Culture, as "the software of the mind", shapes the way people think, learn, and behave in different situations (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, understanding the role of culture in education is essential for both educators and learners, especially in an increasingly globalized and diverse world (Wursten & Jacobs, 2013). Among the various dimensions of culture proposed by scholars (Schwartz, 1994; Steenkamp, 2001), one of the most influential and widely used frameworks is Hofstede's (2001) model, which describes national cultures along five bipolar dimensions: power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation (Sannino, Lucchese, Zampone, & Lombardi, 2020). This study focuses on the dimension of individualism/collectivism, which reflects the degree to which people prioritize their personal or group interests and identities (Cortina, Arel, & Smith-Darden, 2017).

Individualism refers to a cultural orientation that emphasizes the independence, autonomy, and uniqueness of individuals. In individualistic societies, people are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate families, and social relationships are based on contracts and mutual benefits. Individualists value personal achievements, rights, and freedoms, and tend to express their opinions and emotions openly (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Schwartz, 1990). Collectivism, on the other hand, refers to a cultural orientation that emphasizes the interdependence, harmony, and conformity of individuals (Hofstede, 1984). In collectivistic societies, people are integrated into strong and cohesive groups that provide them with protection and support in exchange for loyalty and obedience. Collectivists value group goals, norms, and duties, and tend to suppress their personal preferences and feelings for the sake of maintaining social harmony (Oyserman et al., 2002; Schwartz 1990). These two cultural orientations have different implications for various aspects of human behaviour and cognition, such as communication styles, decision-making processes, learning strategies, and emotional regulation (Xiao, 2021; Roveres, 2021).

According to Hofstede's (2001) model, Iran is classified as a moderately collectivistic society with a score of 41 on the individualism/collectivism dimension. This means that Iranian culture is characterized by a strong sense of group identity and solidarity, where family ties, religious beliefs, social obligations, and emotional sharing are highly valued. Iranian culture also

respects tradition and authority, and tends to avoid uncertainty and ambiguity (Jobson et al., 2019; Jaghoory, Björkqvist, & Österman, 2018; Zabihzadeh et al., 2022).

Iranian culture, as a typical example of traditional collectivistic cultures, values harmony, hierarchy, and loyalty within the family and other social groups. Iranians tend to avoid open conflict, respect their elders, and communicate indirectly and figuratively to preserve social order and group cohesion (Haifizi, Steis, Purnell, & Fenkl, 2021). They also emphasize interdependency and expect their children to be raised as part of the family rather than as independent individuals (Hofstede, 2020; Tavazo, 2020). Moreover, Iranians are generally fatalistic and believe in external forces that control their destiny (Haifizi et al., 2021). However, Iranian culture is not static or homogeneous. In recent decades, Iran has undergone significant political, social, economic, and religious changes that have influenced the cultural orientation of its people (Jami, Walker, & Mansouri, 2023). The impact of globalization has also created a generational gap in values and attitudes, with younger Iranians leaning more towards individualism and personal autonomy, while older Iranians adhering more to collectivism and social conformity (Yousefpour, 2022).

Hofstede (2001) explains that Iran's collectivism manifests in displays of loyalty to a 'group' the prioritization of conformity as a core value. However, this score may not capture the complexity and diversity of Iranian culture. Researchers have argued that Iranian culture also exhibits some features of individualism, such as self-direction and achievement orientation (Joshanloo & Ghaedi, 2009), or that Iranian individualism is a result of historical, geographical, or political factors that have forced Iranians to rely on themselves and their close kin rather than on outsiders (Bar, 2004 as cited in Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2012). One of the domains where the tension between individualism and collectivism in Iranian culture is evident is the education system. The education system in Iran is largely based on competition and individual achievement rather than on collaboration and group learning. Students are encouraged to compete with each other for grades and status rather than to cooperate and share knowledge and skills (Nejati, Nejati, & Nami, 2010). The prevailing pedagogy and classroom settings do not foster creative and critical thinking or social and emotional skills among students. Furthermore, the cultural norms that discourage expressing one's opinions and feelings openly also hinder effective communication and collaboration in the classroom. These factors pose a challenge for educators who want to promote teamwork and a more collective approach to social relations (Partovi & Wyness, 2022).

As one of the crucial parts of the education system, textbooks play a pivotal role in influencing and molding the cultural identities of students within the education system (Morning, 2008). They convey cultural components such as beliefs, norms, attitudes, and values that are

considered desirable and worthy of passing on to the next generation (De Castell, 1991; Derakhshan, 2018). Textbooks also respond to changes in curriculum and society over time (Altbach, 1995). Therefore, analyzing the content and representation of them can reveal how cultural values are portrayed and promoted in the education system.

In centralized education systems such as in Iran (Eslamdoost, King, & Tajeddin, 2020), textbooks are generally recognized as being the major learning sources especially in primary school and as a medium to which school children are exposed in their daily life can have lasting effects for them (Imada, 2012). Also, they play an important role in disseminating cultural components of the society in teaching-learning process and can help students learn about the uniqueness of their culture (Javadi Yeganeh & Hashemi, 2008). However, textbooks are not neutral or objective; they reflect the ideologies and interests of the authors, publishers, and policymakers who produce and approve them. Thus, it is important to evaluate textbooks from a pedagogical and critical perspective (Hilliard, 2014).

Numerous studies have explored the portrayal of individualism and collectivism in textbooks from various fields and countries, shedding light on the cultural values and beliefs that are promoted through educational materials. For example, Liu (2023) found in her study that textbooks of Morality and Laws in China selectively employ neoliberal ideas to promote an understanding of personhood where students are expected to not only practice self-reliance, but also prioritize collective and national interests over their rights and freedom. Mayworm, Hamed, and Christensen's (2022) analysis of Moral Education textbooks in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) found that they are more focused on collectivistic values and goals than individualistic ones, which are consistent with the traditional culture and positive education approach of UAE. Alpaslan, Yalvac, and Loving's (2015) content analysis of nine 6th grade science textbooks published in Türkiye between 1975 and 1997 revealed that they reflect educational reforms that have shifted from a teacher-centered and discipline-oriented approach to a student-centered and social learning approach. The authors inferred that the current Science textbooks emphasize social learning and a collectivist science approach instead of an individualist and one scientific method approach. Imada's (2012) research on narratives in textbooks from the United States and Japan found that American stories tended to emphasize themes of self-direction and achievement, while Japanese stories placed more emphasis on conformity and group harmony. Imada also observed that these cultural disparities were reflected in the attribution styles used in each type of narrative, with American stories featuring dispositional and self-serving attributions, and Japanese stories often using situational and self-critical attributions.

In Iranian context, Babaii (2022) explored the interplay of policy, culture, and political ideology in the English language teaching (ELT) curriculum in post-revolutionary Iran through content analysis of official documents and local textbooks. Her findings revealed that the textbooks challenge the individualistic, competitive, and self-centered lifestyle promoted by neoliberalism by encouraging collective, selfless work and a cooperative attitude. Mofidi (2020) analyzed the cultural identity of English Result series used in Iranian language institutes and found that they exhibit more features of individualist cultures than collectivist ones. According to Farigam's (2021) insightful analysis, there has been a noteworthy increase in the utilization of first-person narrative in contemporary Persian fiction among Iranian novelists over the past decade and a half. This trend, as highlighted by Farigam, reflects a growing emphasis on individualistic values within Iranian society. In their study, Hasanzadeh and Alizadeh (2018) investigated the cultural identity of Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers using Hofstede's model of collectivism/individualism. Contrary to Hofstede's survey of Iranians as collectivistic, they found that Iranian EFL teachers identified as individualistic. The researchers reported that Iranian EFL teachers promote competition, risk-taking, directness, openness, innovative problem-solving approaches, and independence among their students. They also encourage freedom of expression, questioning of teachers, and active participation in the learning process. Kavousipour, Noorafshan, Pourahmad, and Dehghani-Nazhvani, (2015) found in their study that university students' achievement motivation level is higher than average and that personal, cultural, social and educational related factors affect their motivation level implying that Iranian motivation is success-based. In a study by Mohammadi and Sharififar (2016) examining the factors contributing to the successes and shortcomings of Iranian EFL learners, it was noted that learners often attribute their outcomes to both internal and external factors. They found that learners tend to place greater emphasis on external attributions, in line with the cultural norms of collectivistic societies.

Also, in analyzing the level of happiness as one of the characteristics of individualism, as presented by Imada in 2012, Hemmati's study (2018) revealed that the level of happiness among university students is not satisfactory. The existing body of research in the field of cultural studies has shed light on the representation of culture in various contexts. However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the analysis of cultural representation in textbooks that accurately reflect the local culture of Iranian society. Given the importance of textbooks as a tool for instilling cultural values in young learners, and to fill this gap in research, the aim of this study is to analyze Iranian primary school textbooks in order to investigate their potential role in promoting cultural dissemination and preserving local cultural identity. This study is noteworthy because it identifies

the cultural orientation inherent in the primary education curriculum of Iran. It also presents a methodology that could facilitate the creation of evaluation criteria for assessing cultural content in textbooks. By using these criteria, curriculum specialists could develop pedagogical materials that are better aligned with the cultural needs of Iranian students.

The present study focuses on the "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks used in primary schools. These books are designed to teach students about moral, social, and religious values and issues, and thus have a direct impact on their intellectual, emotional, and moral development (Zamani & Dehghani, 2009). Considering the significance of these textbooks in cultural transmission, the present study addresses the following questions:

- To what extent, in terms of quantity, are cultural values represented in second through sixth grade "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks?
- Is there a difference in distribution of the individualistic and collectivistic value categories among the different grade levels?
- To what extent, in terms of quantity, culturally specific cognitive tendencies are represented in second through sixth grade "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks?

2. Research Method

The present study aimed to determine the extent to which cultural values and tendencies are conveyed in Iran's primary school textbooks. This study used a comparative descriptive approach and it employed content analysis as the technique for data analysis. The study population consisted of five primary school "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks in academic year 2019-2020, which were selected through targeted sampling and analyzed in full. The "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks are an integral component of the primary education curriculum in Iran. Students in Grades 2-6 are mandated to study this subject, in addition to core subjects like reading, writing, math, social studies, science, and Persian. The textbooks' length varies between a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 100 pages, depending on the grade level. The lessons in these textbooks aim to inculcate religious and moral values in pupils, covering religious laws, traditions, and rituals, as well as cultural and ethical education on fundamental values such as kindness, forgiveness, generosity, courage, honesty, and patience (Rabiei et al., 2020). Overall, the "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks play a valuable function in the primary education system in Iran by providing students with a foundation in religion and morality, that is based on moral education and religious beliefs. The total number of pages in these five textbooks is 547, containing 93 lessons that include texts

and a variety of exercises. Given that the texts included in the lessons cover a major part of the main concepts and objectives of the lessons and are selected and written according to the cultural and educational needs of students, the present study therefore aimed at analyzing the texts of the 93 lessons which in total consisted of 3806 sentences. Also, the unit of analysis included "sentences" and "pictures" of the lessons.

The data collection method was based on Imada's (2012) two lists of individualistic-collectivistic values and cognitive tendencies, which were used to code the content of the textbooks. The present study consisted of two parts; (a) analyzing the content of the "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks for embedded individualistic and collectivistic cultural values and (b) analyzing the texts and pictures of the lessons of these textbooks for the manifestation of individualistic and collectivistic cognitive tendencies. In the first part of this study, Imada's (2012) value list containing 49 individualistic and collectivistic values has been used. Based on this list, the 49 values were grouped into 9 larger categories of which, five categories consisted of individualistic values (self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, and power) and four categories consisted of collectivistic values (conformity, tradition, benevolence, and group harmony). Using Behling and Law's (2000) technique, the list was translated from English into Persian by a translator and then, the translated version was back-translated into original language by another translator and after comparing the original and back-translated versions the final draft was prepared by the third translator. The validity of the list was confirmed by the opinions of an expert panel including a Social Sciences professor, an Educational Sciences professor, and a Literature professor and to measure the Inter-rater reliability, 30% of the texts were randomly selected from studied textbooks by two first authors. They read the randomly selected texts independently and coded them for the presence or absence of individualistic and collectivistic values and then the level of their agreement was measured through Cohen's kappa. The value for Kappa was 0.90.

In the second part of the study, the content of the studied textbooks was analyzed in terms of manifesting cognitive tendencies that are considered to be theoretical parts of individualism and collectivism and would be reflected in various characteristics of the texts. To do so, a list including six items (perspective taking, success versus failure outcome, casual attribution, visual attention, emotion valance, and the number of emotional word/phrases) prepared and validated by Imada (2012) has been used. As in first part of the study, the validity of this list also was approved by the same expert panel and to determine its reliability the same raters, coded randomly selected texts and inter-rater reliability was measured through Cohen's kappa which was equal to 0.90.

In order to answer the first question of the study, "To what extent, in terms of quantity are cultural values represented in Iranian "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks?" the texts included in 93 lessons were codded for the frequency of cultural values of individualism and collectivism and then descriptive statistics were used to find out the overall frequency and frequency percentage of these values in the content of the studied textbooks. Likewise, to address the second question of the study "Is there a difference in distribution of the value categories of individualism and collectivism among the different grade levels?" the frequency data for five grades were collected and compared with each other.

Also, to answer the third question of the study, "To, what extent, in terms of quantity, culturally specific cognitive tendencies are represented in Iranian "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks?" the content of the 93 lessons was codded for six items namely, the narrator of the story (main character/a third person); whether the story is about success, failure, neither, or both; to whom the outcome (success/failure) is attributed (internal factors, external factors, both, or neither); the number of people in each picture (none, one person, two people, or three or more people); whether the story is happy, sad, neutral/neither, or includes both happy and sad elements; and the numbers of positive (e.g., smiled), negative (e.g., felt like crying), and neutral (e. g., surprised) emotional phrases (Imada, 2012) and then collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. To demonstrate the presence of individualistic and collectivistic values and cognitive tendencies in the content of the textbooks analyzed, Table 1 provides specific sentences that exemplify the prevalence of these categories and tendencies.

Table1. Sample Data Analysis

Analyzed sentence for each component	Sources
• Self-direction - I want to always have a good life.	Lesson 18, (Grade 2)
• Stimulation - Everything in the village was interesting and spectacular for them.	Lesson 20, (Grade 3)
• Hedonism - Freshness and happiness ripples on the faces of the children.	Lesson 16, (Grade 5)
• Achievement - He won again.	Lesson 16, (Grade 4)
• Power - It splits the soil with power.	Lesson 2, (Grade 5)

• Conformity - Everyone stood up to respect him.	Lesson 1, (Grade 2)
• Tradition - During *iftar*, they spread a simple table.	Lesson 1۰, (Grade 2)
• Benevolence - The body is a blessing given to us by God.	Lesson 11, (Grade 6)
• Group harmony - We talk together and have fun.	Lesson 7, (Grade 5)
• perspective taking - That day he had decided to bring Ibrahim to the palace (third person narrator).	Lesson 4, (Grade 3)
• Success Versus Failure Outcome - They have been able to fast the month of Ramadan successfully (success).	Lesson 11 (Grade 3)
• Causal Attribution - With the help of his companions, he guided the people and conveyed divine messages to them (external attribution).	Lesson 4, (Grade 5)
• visual attention - Everyone was counting the minutes for Ibrahim to come (three or more people in picture).	Lesson 4, (Grade 3)
• happy vs. sad theme - All the children of the world are happy and smiling on that beautiful day (happy theme).	Lesson 12, (Grade 4)
• emotional words/phrases - Obeying these valuable commands enhances kindness and strengthens intimacy (positive emotions).	Lesson 10, (Grade 6)

Imada's (2012) Individualistic and Collectivistic values and cognitive tendencies in themes of texts

As shown in Table 1, individualistic and collectivistic values and cognitive tendencies are incorporated in the themes of texts used in the analysis. Here is an example excerpt from the Second Grade "Gifts of Heaven" textbook, Lesson Three, Page 18, which illustrates how the contents of the textbooks were analyzed for the presence of individualistic and collectivistic values:

[Mother raised her hands to the sky and prayed in the moonlight. The boy heard his mother's prayers and slowly said amen.

- God heal the sick!

- God help the needy!

- God guide everyone to the right path!

The boy asked her: Mom! Why do not you pray for yourself?!

She patted her child on the head and said: Darling we first pray for others and then for ourselves!]

The values used in this story are as follows: Religiousness (raising hand to the sky and praying); Conformity (saying "amen"); power (healing the sick); Helpfulness (helping the needy); Leadership (guiding to right path); Curiosity (asking); Friendship and affection (patting the child on the head); Self-sacrifice (praying for others). Also, a few examples of analyzed pictures in the studied textbooks are presented below in Figures 1 through 4.

Figure 1. Visual attention (Grade 2)

Figure 2. Visual attention (Grade 5)

Figure 3. Visual attention (Grade 6)

Figure 4. Visual attention (Grade 3)

As illustrated in Figures 1 through 4, the included pictures exemplify the presence of individualism and collectivism in the studied textbooks.

3. Findings

In the first part of the study, the frequency distribution of the individualistic and collectivistic values in the content of the five primary school "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks have been calculated and represented in Table 2.

Table2. Frequency distribution of individualistic (IND) and collectivistic (COL) values in the "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks

Cultural pattern	Component	Sub-component	Second Grade		Third Grade		Fourth Grade		Fifth Grade		Sixth Grade		Total F of sub-component in 5 textbooks	Total F & % of component in 5 textbooks	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%
IND	Self-direction	Freedom	--	--	1	.38	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	305	33
		Creativity	--	--	7	2.7	3	1.5	3	1.4	--	---	13		
		Independence	--	--	1	.38	1	.51	--	--	1	.57	3		
		Choosing own goals	4	4.5	9	3.4	4	2.07	2	.92	3	1.7	22		
		Curiosity	14	15.9	64	24.8	51	26.4	45	21.4	42	24	216		
		Self- respect	--	--	1	.38	3	1.5	--	--	--	--	4		
		Self-development	1	1.1	1	.38	2	1.03	--	--	2	1.1	6		
		Control	5	5.6	15	5.8	9	4.6	5	2.3	6	3.4	40		
	Stimulation	Exciting life	--	--	9	3.4	14	7.2	3	1.4	3	1.7	29	32	3.4
		Varied life	--	--	1	.38	1	.51	--	--	1	.57	3		
	Hedonism	Pleasure	15	17	12	4.6	22	11.3	13	6.19	6	3.4	68	176	19
		Enjoyment	20	22.7	34	13.1	20	10.3	27	12.8	7	4	108		
	Achievement	Ambition	--	--	4	1.5	2	1.03	5	2.3	2	1.1	13	169	18.2
		Being influential	1	1.1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1		
		Competence	4	4.5	10	3.8	2	1.03	7	3.3	12	6.8	35		
		Success	--	--	11	4.26	9	4.6	6	2.8	11	6.2	37		

		Intellectual ability	2	2.2	11	4.26	1	.51	3	1.4	9	5.1	26		
		Courage & bravery	4	4.5	15	5.8	4	2.07	5	2.3	12	6.8	40		
		Competition	--	--	5	1.9	2	1.03	5	2.3	5	2.8	17		
	Power	Social power	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	.57	1	242	26.1
		Wealth	--	--	--	--	2	1.03	7	3.3	1	.57	10		
		Leadership	8	9.09	27	10.4	15	7.7	33	15.7	36	20.5	119		
		Public image	3	3.4	1	.38	--	--	1	.47	--	--	5		
		Social recognition	--	--	11	4.2	1	.51	7	3.3	2	1.1	21		
		aggressiveness	7	7.9	8	3.1	25	12.9	33	15.7	13	7.4	86		
	Total		25	88	100	258	100	193	100	210	100	175	100	924	924	100

Note: the above portion corresponds to the "INDIV" (individualism) block; the following corresponds to the "COL" (collectivism) block.

COL	**Conformity**	Obedience	7	3.5	10	3.7	9	4.07	7	3.4	12	6.3	45	232	21.6
		Self-discipline	5	2.5	9	3.3	--	--	7	3.4	10	5.3	31		
		Politeness	17	8.7	14	5.2	23	10.4	9	4.4	12	6.3	75		
		Respectfulness	10	5.1	9	3.3	10	4.5	4	1.9	15	7.9	48		
		Self-sacrifice	4	2.05	7	2.6	6	2.7	4	1.9	7	3.7	28		
		Adjustment	2	1.02	--	--	1	.45	--	--	2	1.06	5		
	Tradition	Respect for tradition	9	4.6	10	3.7	3	1.3	4	1.9	3	1.6	29	314	29.2
		Religiousness	42	21.5	66	24.9	38	17.1	50	24.5	39	20.7	235		
		Accepting one's portion in life	1	.51	2	.75	7	3.1	1	.49	3	1.6	14		
		Modesty	5	2.5	4	1.5	2	.9	6	2.9	6	3.1	23		
		Moderation	1	.51	4	1.5	3	1.3	3	1.4	2	1.06	13		
	Benevolence	Helpfulness	1	.51	2	.75	10	4.5	10	4.9	6	3.1	29	222	20.6
		Responsible-ness	2	1.02	14	5.2	3	1.3	10	4.9	6	3.1	35		
		Forgiveness	25	12.8	9	3.3	12	5.4	13	6.3	9	4.7	68		
		Honesty	2	1.02	--	--	2	.9	3	1.4	1	.53	8		
		Loyalty	2	1.02	4	1.5	1	.45	3	1.4	4	2.1	14		
		Sympathy	3	1.5	10	3.7	14	6.3	5	2.4	9	4.7	41		
		Pleasure in making others happy	2	1.02	13	4.9	7	3.1	1	.4	4	2.1	27		
	G r	Community/	2	1.02	2	.75	4	1.8	7	3.4	2	1.06	17	305	28.4

		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
	group support													
	Collaboration	6	3.07	5	1.8	3	1.3	6	2.9	3	1.6	23		
	Sense of belonging	4	2.05	7	2.6	10	4.5	1	.49	3	1.6	25		
	Harmonious relationship	8	4.1	15	5.6	14	6.3	17	8.3	7	3.7	61		
	Sharing	5	2.5	10	3.7	4	1.8	4	1.9	--	--	23		
	Friendship & affection	30	15.3	39	14.7	35	15.8	29	14.2	23	12.2	156		
Total	24	195	100	265	100	221	100	204	100	188	100	1073	1073	100

*F: Frequency; %: Frequency percentage

As indicated in Table 2, both value categories of individualism and collectivism were present in the content of the studied textbooks, however among the categories of individualism, the total frequency of self-direction was significantly higher than other four components (i.e., hedonism, stimulation, achievement, and power) and the component of stimulation had the lowest frequency among the components of individualism. Also, among the components of collectivism (i.e., conformity, tradition, benevolence, and group harmony) in the studied textbooks, the components of tradition and benevolence had the highest and lowest frequency, respectively.

To discover which values were particularly emphasized in the studied textbooks, the frequency of each of the 49 subcomponents of individualistic and collectivistic values were examined and the results indicated that "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks particularly emphasized religiousness, curiosity, friendship and affection, leadership, and enjoyment. In order to determine whether the distribution of the individualistic and collectivistic value categories would vary among the different grade levels, the frequencies of them were compared for five grades and the result presented in Table 3.

Table3. Value category frequencies for five grades

Value Category	Grade									
	Second grade		Third grade		Fourth grade		Fifth grade		Sixth grade	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Self-direction	24	27.2	99	38.2	73	37.6	55	26.02	54	30.7
Stimulation	--	--	10	3.7	15	7.7	3	1.4	4	2.2

Hedonism	35	39.7	46	17.7	42	21.6	40	18.9	13	7.4
Achievement	11	12.1	56	21.5	20	10.2	31	14.4	51	28.8
Power	18	20.3	47	18.08	43	22.1	81	38.4	53	30.5
Conformity	45	22.8	49	18.4	49	22.1	31	15.1	58	30.5
Tradition	58	29.6	86	32.4	53	23.7	64	31.2	53	28.1
Benevolence	37	18.8	52	19.5	49	21.9	45	21.7	39	20.7
Group harmony	55	28.1	78	29.3	70	31.5	64	31.2	38	20.1

*F: Frequency; %: Frequency percentage

As evident in Table 3, individualistic and collectivistic value categories were more emphasized in third and fourth grades and less emphasized in second grade and this implies that as students advance to higher grades, the emphasis on individualism and collectivism increases. In the second part of the study, the frequency data for the six items of cognitive tendencies in the content of the studied textbooks were collected and presented in Table 4.

Table4. Frequency of the six items of cognitive tendencies in the content of studied textbooks

coding items		Second Grade	Third Grade	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade	Sixth Grade	Total	%
Narrator of the story	Main character	4	6	7	9	5	31	32.6
	Third person	16	14	12	10	12	64	67.3
Success vs. failure	Success	13	12	11	7	7	50	52.6
	Failure	--	1	--	--	--	1	1
	Both	--	3	4	4	4	15	15.7
	Neither	7	4	4	8	6	29	30.5
Attribution of outcome	Internal (own effort/personality)	--	3	6	1	3	13	13.6
	External (other people/situation)	13	12	7	7	6	45	47.3
	Both	--	1	2	3	2	8	8.4
	Neither	7	4	4	8	6	29	30.5
Attribution of success	Internal (own effort/personality)	--	1	5	--	1	7	14
	External (other people/situation)	13	11	6	7	6	43	86

	Both	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Neither	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Attribution of failure	Internal (own effort/personality)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	External (other people/ situation)	--	1	--	--	--	1	1
	Both	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Picture contents	No people	--	--	2	7	4	13	13.6
	One person	2	2	2	1	--	7	7.3
	Two people	3	3	2	1	4	13	13.6
	Three or more people	15	15	13	10	9	62	65.2
Happy vs. sad	Happy	10	8	6	6	7	37	38.9
	Sad	--	4	2	1	2	9	9.4
	Both	5	3	9	5	1	23	24.2
	Neither	5	5	2	7	7	26	27.3
Emotional words/phrases	Positive	90	172	159	137	118	676	59.03
	Negative	15	90	93	89	57	344	30.04
	Neutral	7	31	43	29	15	125	10.9

As shown in Table 4, the results obtained from content analysis of primary school "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks are as follows:

1. Narrator of the stories. More than half of the texts in the content of the studied textbooks had a third-person narrator (64 = 67.3%).

2. Success versus failure outcome. Most of the texts of the studied textbooks had a success outcome (50 = 52.6%) and only 1 % of them were about failure.

3. Causal attribution. The majority of the outcomes made external attribution (i.e., other people or situations were responsible for the outcome) (45 = 47.3 %) and few of them made internal attribution (i.e., the actor's own action/personality was responsible for the outcome) (13 = 13.6%). Also, when analyzing the success and failure outcomes separately, larger part of success outcomes made external attribution (43 = 86%). There was only 1 failure outcome which it was attributed to external factor.

4. Picture contents. In most of the pictures beside the texts of the studied textbooks there were three or more people (62 = 65.2%).

5. Happy versus sad stories. Generally, the texts in the content of "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks conveyed happy themes more than sad ones (37 = 38.9% vs. 9 = 9.4%).

6. Emotional words/phrases. There were more positive emotional words/phrases (e.g., happy, smiled) than negative ones (e.g., sad, felt like crying) (676 = 59.03 % vs. 344 = 30.04 %), and more negative emotional words/phrases than neutral ones (e.g., surprised) (344 = 30.04% vs. 125 = 10.9%) in the texts of the studied textbooks.

Upon comparing the textbooks from five grades in terms of six different cognitive tendencies, it was found that the use of third-person narration diminishes in higher grade levels. Furthermore, the second grade showed the highest frequency of stories with successful outcomes, suggesting that students may encounter fewer of these stories as they progress in their academic careers. On the other hand, there was a clear trend towards a greater proportion of external attribution of outcomes in the earlier grades as compared to later grades, while the trend in internal attribution exhibited no clear pattern. Additionally, there was a decrease in the occurrence of pictures featuring three or more people, as students advance in grade levels. Even though all the textbooks for grades two to six contained happy content, their frequency varied slightly across grades. Specifically, the textbooks for second graders possessed the highest frequency of happy content. Finally, analyzing textbooks from second to sixth grade revealed a noticeable trend of increasing frequency of positive emotional words and phrases from second to fourth grade. However, the frequency dropped in the fifth and sixth grades, while the frequency of negative emotional language appeared to decrease slightly from second to sixth grade. It can be concluded that textbooks for earlier grades, especially second grade, contain more collective elements, such as third-person perspective and pictures with three or more people, compared to higher grades.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the cultural orientation of the content of Iranian primary school textbooks of "Gifts of Heaven" regarding cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism and discovering their cognitive tendencies that are also related to the individualism and collectivism. Based on the findings of this study, while both individualistic and collectivistic value categories particularly religiousness, curiosity, friendship and affection, leadership, and enjoyment were present in the content of Iranian primary school textbooks of "Gifts of Heaven", the prevalence of collectivistic values was significantly higher than that of individualistic values. However, when examining the cognitive tendencies present in the content of the textbooks, a balance was found between individualistic and collectivistic tendencies. This suggests that the textbooks reflect a combination of both cultural orientations, with an emphasis on

collectivism but also incorporating elements of individualism in terms of cognitive tendencies. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Iranian education system seeks to balance both values and cognitive tendencies in its textbooks, highlighting the importance of both individualism and collectivism in shaping the values and attitudes of young learners. This finding is consistent with the findings of Mazloomy, Saki, and Abdoli Mehrjerdi (2018) and inconsistent with the findings of Babaii (2022) and Mofidi (2020).

The value categories of individualism and collectivism were found in the content of the textbooks of all grade levels but were more apparent in higher grades. However, upon analyzing the textbooks in terms of cognitive tendencies, the prevalence of collective elements was higher in earlier grade levels, particularly in second grade, when compared to higher grades. The emphasis on collective elements in earlier grades may be due to the belief that students at this stage are less developed and may benefit more from group-oriented thinking. As students' progress through higher grades and become more intellectually mature, they develop their independent thinking and learning skills, and may show a decline in engagement (Lam et al., 2016).

According to the results, the majority of texts in the content of the studied textbooks had a third person narrator indicating that Iranian people like other collectivistic societies such as East Asians tend to see the self in social context from other's view point and in turn regulate their behaviours accordingly. This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Farigam (2021). Taking third-person perspectives in recalling and imaging events, especially negative events, may provide individuals with diagnostic information for behavioural regulation in social contexts and is thus consistent with Asian cultural emphases on self-improvement and interdependence (Suo & Wang, 2022).

The texts in the content of the studied textbooks were most frequently about success and this reveals that Iranians have achievement motivation and memories of successes are more accessible for them than memories of failures. This finding is consistent with findings of the Amani Nezhad et al., (2022) and Kavousipour et al., (2015). Achievement motivation helps to determine how and why an individual has behaved in a certain way and is one of the crucial psychological factors determining future success. According to this theory, people who show high in achievement motivation tend to be motivated by difficult, challenging and competitive work situations and not by routine and non-competitive situations and habitually spend their time thinking about doing things better (Ah Gang, Han, Fah, & Bansa, 2018).

In attributions for success and failure, the texts in the studied textbooks mostly made external attributions. This finding is consistent with the findings of Mohammadi and Sharififar

(2016) and inconsistent with the findings of Mahmoodi and Karampour (2019). Attribution judgments have important implications for motivated behaviour, as outcomes attributed to external factors of the situation are less likely to motivate action than those attributed to more internal factors. The tendency to externally attribute is far from universal and moreover, that attributing outcomes (either successes or failures) to internal causes may be adaptive for future performance and increase expectations for future success, whereas external attributions can decrease future performance (Myers, Staats, & Gino, 2014). Also, in most of the pictures in the content of the Iranian textbooks there were three or more people. This finding is in consistency with the findings of Imada (2012) who concluded that, to promote individualism, pictures in American stories show a single person more often, whereas to promote collectivism, pictures in Japanese stories like in Asian stories, show more than one person more often. This suggests that visual content might encourage the cultural differences observed in attention and perception and influence how we process information visually (Kuwabara, Alonso, & Ayala, 2020).

Another finding of the present study showed that the texts in the content of the "Gifts of Heaven" textbooks mostly convey happy themes and contain more positive emotional words/phrases than negative ones and this implies that although according to the results of the UN World Happiness Report Iran's happiness score stands at 118th ranking with 4.7 and among countries with four categories of happiness (high, above the mean, below the mean, and low) this country falls into the category of countries below the mean (Helliwell, Layard, Sachs, & Neve, 2021) however, depicting themes of happiness and positive emotions is still one of the common features of the Iranian instructional materials. This finding is inconsistent with the findings of Hemmati (2018). Research demonstrates that happy people are successful across multiple life domains, including marriage, relationships, health, longevity, income and work performance and are more creative, able to multitask and endure boring tasks, and more trusting, helpful and sociable (Diener & Chan, 2011). Considering that happiness, in the sense of a deep, lasting well-being, is a skill that can be learned with committed effort thus, cultivating classroom practices and curricula designed to promote happiness and well-being, in addition to, and not instead of, traditional educational curricula subjects, may lead to ripping the benefits brought about by subjective well-being (Boniwell, Osin, & Martinez, 2016).

The present study showed that cultural values can be reflected in various aspects of textbooks, and textbooks can influence young learners' values, beliefs, and attitudes. As school textbooks play a significant role in both formal and hidden curricula, cultural, educational, and training officials should aim to promote positive socio-cultural values through proper planning,

compiling, and presenting educational programs based on national culture. This study's findings on the individualism and collectivism in Iranian textbooks highlight the importance of creating a balance between these values in shaping the attitudes and values of young learners. Future research should also compare the cultural orientation of textbooks in Iran with those in East Asian and Western nations to further understand this issue.

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