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# An Analysis of the Attitude Toward Women's Affairs Policymaking with Emphasis on "Family Management and Lifestyle" Book of Twelfth Grade Girls

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## Abstract

Considering the importance and impacts of the type of attitude and the cultural-political discourse on the content of gender identity education, the present research addressed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade's textbook called "Family Management and Lifestyle (for girls)" through qualitative content analysis in order to determine the policy makers' approach. The research results showed the anxiety caused by the meaning of girlhood, which ultimately led to a weak-minded interpretation of tenderness and isolation at home. The role of women at home was reduced to physical affairs, and the hierarchical relationship between men and women was also confirmed. The dichotomy between social activities and marriage and the integration of women's identity in marriage were among other findings of this research. The book also made a dualism between presence in the public arena and playing family roles, and in this duality, priority was given to family roles.

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## Introduction

School textbooks somewhat reflect Educational policy. "Educational policy is defined as any systematic intervention to

improve the practice of education at all levels “(Papanikos 2). “In addition, formal education’s most obvious function is to teach academic knowledge and skills. However, its other important function is to educate children to be proper members of the society with distinct cultural values” (Imada).

The contents of textbooks are also among the most important parts of education that show cultural values. Not only education policies of governments determine the contents of these books, but also the goals of cultural policies affect them (contents of textbooks). Given that some of the subjects taught in schools are related to the cultural field, their content is compiled based on the cultural discourse. “On the other hand, considering the concept of cultural reproduction, schools and formal education play an important role in the transfer of social and economic values through their curriculum and organizational form” (Sabhaninejad et al). Although in Bourdieu's opinion, this concept refers to the reproduction of the middle-class culture to maintain the dominance structure, the main idea of the theory of cultural reproduction is to emphasize the role of schools in culture transmission.

In this regard, one of the important cultural topics entered the school textbooks is the education of gender identity. Even though some parts of the textbooks such as mathematics and literature indirectly contain aspects of this issue, some other books directly address it, one of which is the 12<sup>th</sup> grade's textbook called "Family Management and Lifestyle (for girls)". The different content of this book for girls compared to boys shows that the policy makers' approach supports the distinctions of gender roles. Education of gender roles is a challenging topic in the cultural and educational issues of women.

Some sociological theories criticize gender identity and basically consider gender as a completely social creation that does not have a fixed essence (Giddens 160). In contrast, some sociological and psychological theories emphasize that gender differences naturally exist.

However, both spectrums of theories emphasize the roles of society and culture in shaping the definition of identity and gender roles. Thus, the definition of gender identity provided by any society affects the position of women and men. “Educational contents and gender approach in education policies can have different effects on women’s position and the formation of relations between the two sexes” (Taj Mazinani and Ebrahimi). “In other words, educational contents can increase the skills and qualifications of women and possibly empower them, or keep women in domestic roles and limit them to reproductive and non-earning roles” (Taj Mazinani and Ebrahimi).

According to Blumberg, gender bias in the textbook is one of the “hardest budge rocks in the road to gender equality in education”. Biased textbook contents not only limit women’s worldviews and career choices, but they also distort their self-image and the image of the opposite gender group. Yet, compared to other school-specific drivers of gender inequality, textbook content is less researched and frequently overlooked in the policy debate (Mukitil Islam and Asadullah).

Therefore, what is important in teaching this identity is the dominant attitude towards educational contents and school books, so that the attitude of policy makers or the prevailing discourse about gender identity determines the content of the books. In this regard, the aforementioned book was reviewed by focusing on cognitive theories in policymaking. These theories emphasize the influence of policymakers' values and norms on policy formulation. In fact, the attitudes and

approaches of policymakers can determine the contents of the policies. In addition, the upstream documents available in the field of women affect these policies. For this reason, the main question arose in the present research is “What is the policymakers’ (i.e. the textbook compilers) attitude towards gender identity in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade *Family Management and Lifestyle* book for girls? To answer this question, the qualitative content analysis was used. Hence, the text of the book was coded by writing four sub-questions on gender identity. Then, the codes were analysed to obtain the main components that showed the policymakers’ attitude. Next, the extracted codes were examined using the upstream documents on the field of women and family. In this review, the compliance and non-compliance of the codes with the provisions of these documents were measured as well.

Addressing this issue is necessary because it would be possible to get to know and analyze broader dimensions of the policy attitude toward women and family. In addition, one of the important causes of the inefficiency of cultural policies is the incompatibility between the attitude governing the policy and the attitude of its audience. “When inconsistency exceeds a limit and disobeying or believing in cultural policies becomes common, inconsistency will become a problem and then a crisis, and as a result, the efficiency and effectiveness of cultural policies will decrease. Following that, policymaking will eventually fail”(Jalali). Thus, examining the policymakers’ attitude in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade *Family Management and Lifestyle* book for girls will help gain knowledge about the effectiveness and effects of this policy.

## Background & Theoretical Foundations

Numerous studies were conducted to analyze, criticize, and review the educational content of gender identity in the Islamic Republic of Iran, some of which specifically examined certain textbooks in Iranian schools and some others examined a specific grade or all educational books. In this regard, Forootan, studied the socialization of gender roles by analyzing elementary school textbooks and found out that elements such as sports, use of names, and textbook images reflected the larger share of males compared to females. Abroshan and Arjamandi, investigated the representation of gender stereotypes in Persian books and showed that the number of female authors of the studied textbooks was much lower than that of males. Regarding employment, working outside home had been used 14 times for men and only 3 times for women. The same difference was also seen in political and social roles.

Tajmazinani and Hamed, examined the evolution of gender culture in Persian elementary school textbooks during the years 1978, 1982, and 2003. Their research showed the difference between the presence of men and women in different places, the results of which indicated that women were mostly present at home and men attended open space and social environments. Such a difference was also evident in gender roles. In other words, women were dominated by their maternal role, but the role of fathers was less dominant for men, and their identity was shown independent of their family role. Marzooghi and Mansouri, studied the gender orientation of primary school textbooks and stated that the educational content of these books represented women as emotional and subordinate, and men as wisdom-oriented and commanding.

Maroufi and Najafi reviewed Farsi and Social Sciences textbooks of the elementary school and concluded that only 2.97%

of the contents of the textbooks used family-related concepts. In addition, Tajmazinani and Ebrahimi, conducted a vaster study with a gender analysis of the post-revolution education policy. Their research dealt with the content of general education and emphasized that such contents were focused on the importance of maternal and feminine roles for girls.

In two other studies, the content of the "Family Management and Lifestyle" textbook was criticized. Khalili and Amarlou, reviewed this book and concluded that the most frequent stereotypes were anxiety and worry, women's duties and interests, and clichés such as anger, support, and household breadwinner (related to men). Eftekhari et al, also analyzed the philosophical components of this book and found out that the components of philosophical thinking occurred in a relatively favorable and semi-active manner.

In addition to the researches that investigated gender identity in Iranian school textbooks, some other studies were conducted on the textbooks in other countries. In this regard, TRECKE, analyzed the presence of women in the texts of American high school textbooks. The results of the analysis showed that many influential and important women had been excluded. Besides, women had been portrayed in a passive role, whose lives were determined by economic and political trends.

Furthermore, Atay and Danju, examined the textbooks of the Republic of Cyprus schools from the perspective of representing gender stereotypes in an individual dimension. Their results showed that men had been described as "brave", "independent", "intelligent", "leader", "creative", "supportive", "wealthy", "hardworking", and "lazy", and women's personal characteristics were "beautiful", "sweet", "emotional", "happy", "sad", "surprised", and "friendly".

In their research, Bhog and Ghose, emphasized that writing textbooks was closely related to the policies of the country. What and where to include as knowledge, and the predetermined norms and practices of curricula were related to the policies of any country. The results of their research showed that although gender was an accepted concept in policy and program formulation in India, gender issues were still understood in limited ways and gender was presented as a limiting biological issue for girls.

In another study, Wei Wang, reviewed twelve primary school Chinese textbooks (grades one to six), and identified four categories including family roles, occupational roles, activities, and descriptive words. The results in all categories showed that males' roles were more than females'. Traditionally, boys were more important and had a higher position than girls had in Chinese families.

Furthermore, Badanelli Rubio et al, examined the role of school textbooks in the construction of male and female national identities during the Francoist dictatorship. The results of their study showed that women's feelings were described by emphasizing the concepts of love, pride, and shame (maternity and the private sphere of the family), and for men, the concepts of hierarchy, honor, and heroism were used, which were mainly related to the public sphere as well as the political and economic society.

In this regard, Silva and Figueira, analyzed the social representation of women in the Portuguese high school textbooks selected by the schools in the Minas state. In the visual and audio content of those books, the dominance of men over women was obvious, so that most of the scenes included traditional roles of gender relations in which women were

dominated.

In another study (De la Torre and Guichot-Reina), representation of men's and women's gender identity in the textbooks of the Spanish democracy period was investigated. The results of the research showed that the textbooks studied were biased in terms of gender, and were the continuation of the discursive strategies that devalued women as social actors while maintaining male dominance. Women were also identified mainly based on family and emotional relationships than professional status.

Reviewing the studies conducted on the gender content of the textbooks showed that they had had a sociological view on the subject of gender identity education. In addition to the exploratory investigation of the gender identity discourse in the textbooks, the present research considered such educations as a reflection of the cultural policy sphere. In other words, the content of these texts was affected by the attitude and discourse of policy makers. Hence, examining the content of the books could make it possible to analyse and achieve the pathology of the attitudes of policymakers in this field.

Some policy theories emphasize the role of interests in the formation of a policy. From the perspective of theories such as the game theory, a policy is the result of the interaction between the interests of the political actors. On the other hand, the theory of rational choice assumes a policy as a set of cost and benefit estimates of a rational politician. However, there is another type of theory in public policymaking that considers policies as the result of policymakers' beliefs, norms, and values.

In this regard, in the book *Politics, Values and Public Policymaking*, Fisher argued that values were contained in the policymaking process, and policymakers were inclined towards certain values when designing policies. Ideas and values expand the scope of policy analysis from objective dimensions to subjective issues, from tangible to intangible factors, and from formal to informal frameworks. Public policy analysis will be incomplete without considering the ideas and values of policymakers. Such ideas and values determine the intellectual foundations of policymakers; they direct the way of processing the available information, issues, and policy environment, and are even able to legitimize and justify policy choices and explain the reason for changing policies (Smith and Larimer.).

The cognitive dimension of public policy is of particular importance in its analysis as it is a clear reference of how social problems and the roles of the State are conceived. It is also able to validate the existing alignment between the public opinion's expectations "and the governmental agenda (Martinez Coral). This approach is based on the belief that cognitive and normative elements play an important role in how actors understand and explain the world, and has stimulated a variety of works from various approaches" (Surel). "In this regard, it should be noted that the approach encourages deeper reflection on the contours of a particular policy discussion, the shape assigned a particular "problem"" (Bacchi 3).

Thus, the policymaker's attitude, which shows his intellectual values, has a great impact on politics. The type of policymaker's attitude not only affects the inclusion of the issue in the policy agenda, but is also effective in the next stage of this process, i.e. its presentation. In fact, issues that are in line with the attitude of policymakers are included in the agenda of politics.

At the policy formulation stage, which is related to designing and selecting policy tools, the policymaker's attitude and approach to the problem is also effectively important. "It involves identifying and/or crafting a set of policy alternatives to address a problem, and narrowing that set of solutions in preparation for the final policy decision. At this stage, the interests of the actors are taken into account and dominant ideas and values are also influential" (Sidney et al 79). In addition, at this stage, the issue entered the agenda is analyzed based on the attitude and perspective of the policymakers. In fact, the way the problem is defined (and the solutions are searched for) largely determines the actor's beliefs about the causes and potential solutions of the problem, especially in the case of cultural policies, where the policy content is directly affected by the values and beliefs of the policymakers. The effectiveness and results of cultural policies have a lot to do with the attitude and policy values that permeate the content of the policy. Hence, knowing and analyzing a policy from this angle can make it possible to clarify the important aspects of the policy. Regarding textbooks, it should be noted that they form the basis of a standard learning and common culture. Textbooks also serve to transmit knowledge that a society considers valid and worthy of transmission to future generations.

But they also transmit a belief system, one that legitimizes the status quo and the social order of the dominant groups that hold power (De la Torre-Sierra and Guichot-Reina,). Rather, what counts as legitimate knowledge is the result of complex power relations and struggles among identifiable class, race, gender, and religious groups. Thus, education and power are terms of an indissoluble couplet (Appel). In fact, textbooks are central in educational research.

because they represent the "intended curriculum," sitting at the intersection between individual students and the macro forces of society, culture, and politics (Lucy et al). "These texts represent a system of choices from the 'external' culture. Despite the diversity of resources available to teachers, the research on school texts reveals a pervasive ideology – that of legitimacy of the status quo" (Arnot 66).

On the other hand, Bourdieu (1998) argued that masculine domination is the most influential in social institutions in which the maintenance of the social order is a key national project. Consequently, he pointed particularly to education as a central ideological site for the reproduction of gender inequality (Dillabough).

Therefore, by analyzing the content of the book "Family Management and Lifestyle" as an educational and cultural policy, the attitude and type of view that was dominant in the issue of women in the field of policymaking could be obtained. This theoretical framework would take the analysis of politics from the superficial layers of politics to deep and fundamental layers and could also reveal the complex dimensions of politics.

## Methodology

Considering that the research objective was to obtain the policymaker's attitude, which was of meaning and concept type, and given that qualitative content analysis focused on the hidden themes and meaning of the text, the qualitative content analysis method of the comparative type was used in this study. "When a researcher intends to examine the validity of a theory, a model, or a hypotheses, s/he uses the comparative content analysis method" (Momenirad et al).

Regarding the components of various discourses about women, four dimensions of women's identity that could express people's attitudes towards women were focused in the book in order to find out the policymakers' attitude. Thus, according to these four dimensions, the following sub-questions were raised, based on which the content of the book was coded:

1. How is girlhood identity defined in the book?
2. How is the position of a woman (mother, wife, daughter) shown in the family?
3. How is the place of marriage defined in the social identity of a woman?
4. How is the role of women addressed in the social and political arena?

It should be noted that the unit of coding the content of the book was "theme". "The registration unit was some part of the text specified by being placed in a certain category (code)" (Holsty 182).

## Data Analysis

Based on the extracted codes, the following components were obtained and analyzed.

### Components extracted

Question	Component	Sub-component
<b>1: girlhood identity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Associating girlhood with weakness and being second-class</li> <li>2. Limitation of showing girlhood identity in social arena</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive role of men</li> <li>• concern of the meaningful of tenderness</li> <li>• Limiting women's abilities to executive and physical affairs of house</li> <li>• Encouraging women to be inferior to men</li> </ul>
<b>2: position of women in family</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reducing the position of women to physical and executive affairs</li> <li>2. Confirming the hierarchical relationship between men and women</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limiting women's capabilities to executive and physical matters of home</li> <li>• Encouraging women to be inferior to men</li> </ul>
<b>3: position of marriage in political and social identity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrating women's identity in marriage (encouraging marriage)</li> <li>2. Dichotomization between marriage and social activities</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of unmarried girls from society</li> <li>• Prioritizing marriage over social activities</li> </ul>
<b>4: role of women in social and public arena</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dichotomization between presence of women in public and family arenas</li> <li>2. Prioritization of women's family roles over social activities</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition of women's right to employment</li> <li>• Limiting women's employment to some social fields</li> <li>• Getting caught in duality of modern employment and traditional housekeeping</li> </ul>

#### 1.1. Associating girlhood with weakness and being second-class



In general, a kind of weakness was felt in the mentioned book when describing the characteristics of girlhood. This could be analyzed using two important subcomponents, first of which was men's support for girlhood identity. Although this support could be for the dignity of the female identity, the book used themes such as "Wherever she needs help, he does it." and portrayed girls' disability to describe the supportive role of men due to the neediness and weakness of girls. This view was also seen in the final chapters of the book, which examined the role of men and women, and considered man as the pillar of life and responsible for taking care of women and children.

In this part, women's need for men in families was due to their weakness and immaturity, and men were implicitly considered the superior sex: "Women accept influence and support easily, while men resist the influence and support of others"; "When the social status of a woman is higher than that of a man, the man generally feels inferior and may increase his family pressure on the woman".

However, male guardianship was not superior and top-down; it had limits, and the relationship between men and women was complementary and overlapping. Perhaps, in some areas, men's nature could be considered more immature and fragile, requiring emotional capacities of women. Besides, contrary to the claim of the power of women's feelings, here the book was not able to explain the position of a woman as a manager due to this power. In some religious texts, the essential role of women in the stability and continuity of the family has been emphasized, and the effects of this view were faint in the reviewed textbook. As a result, the girlhood identity was defined as somewhat weak and under the superior identity of men.

This view could also be seen in Article 1105 of the Civil Code. The article considered headship in the family as one of the features of the husband. Although the range of male leadership and its examples could be discussed, in this book, according to Article 1105 of the Civil Code, the range of male leadership was considered very broad so that the women's identity was placed in its shadow and considered weak.

The second sub-component was the anxiety caused by the girlhood tenderness meaning. In fact, the meaning of tenderness of feelings was not clear to the policymakers, and they had tried to invite girls to have tenderness in this sense using empathetic literature. In another part of the textbook, reason was obviously placed in front of emotion and this fueled the anxiety caused by the meaning of emotion and tenderness: "Women usually deal with issues more emotionally and expect the same from men, while men look at issues less from an emotional perspective and more from a logical perspective". The conflict between reason and emotion and the lack of using reason by women was only one theory among several different interpretations in this field. In the statements of Imam Khomeini (RA) and Ayatollah Khamenei as the main ideologists of the knowledge base of the Islamic Revolution, not only was a woman's intellect not considered less, but there was no inherent conflict between intellect and emotion. "Although women are not weaker than men in terms of intellectual composition, they are sometimes much stronger. Of course, women's thoughts are different from men's; the type of women's feelings is different from men's... Sometimes, for example, when facing a scientific problem, women's and men's thoughts are not different; but there is a difference in managing life"<sup>1</sup> (11/05/1996). The conflict between reason and emotion also originated from the viewpoints that considered emotional strength to be the cause of



women's intellectual and logical defects. In contrast to this negative representation of feelings, somewhere else, the feelings of girls were described beautiful and the cause of passion and intimacy in the family: "The distinctive feature of girls is their kindness. A girl is full of kindness and tenderness. It is the girl who, with her kindness, can reduce the discomforts and disputes in the home."

One of the important points obtained by examining the upstream documents in the field of women and the codes related to this sector was a serious gap in the upstream documents regarding girls' issues. In fact, the numerous documents and laws for women included no general document and policy for girlhood.

## 1.2. Caution in emergence of girlhood identity in social arena

In this view, taking care of girls mattered, although in the textbook, taking care could have consequences such as limiting and not recognizing girls' independence. For instance, a mother justifying the restrictions placed on her daughter compared to her son might say: "Our concern is related to the dangers that might happen to a girl outside the house. I tell her about the difference between a flower and a tree. A tree may be damaged less and later, because it is a tree". These themes were in contrast with some cases of the upstream documents such as the Charter of Rights and Responsibilities of Women in the Islamic Republic. The initial paragraphs of the first part of the document addressed the right to respect and the dignified life, and in the section dealing with social responsibilities, the right to security from verbal and behavioural aggression of others and the responsibility for one's own speech and behaviour along with respect for other members of the society were emphasized. To achieve these rights, the society should be reformed and create a safe context for women<sup>2</sup> (the 1370 resolution of the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities, 22/09/2004).

Despite the multiplicity of such themes, independence and power were also considered as part of girls' identity, using three codes: "Being a girl does not mean being underdog. You should not let your spirit be weak and break or bend too soon". However, girls' identity was limited to the home environment, so that the influence of female emotions was explained only in the framework of home. In this attitude, the basis of women's gender identity flourished at home and did not manifest itself to appear in the public arena. Even with the emphasis on the power of emotions and pointing to its function in home, its goal in the home environment was also unclear. Some example sentences that contained such themes are as follows: "Don't regret! Don't be so tough and pessimistic! Be yourself, you girl of the home!"; "On the other hand, kindness is a tool with which a girl can replace many things in life. Giving positive vibes and creating joy in the family is a girl's art. The girl creates happiness and joy in the house, through which she can somewhat resolve the problems that each family member has, even her parents".

However, as mentioned before, while the book was trying to show emotions as a sign of girls' strength, it clearly weakened the emotions and confined them to the framework of home by using contradictory statements such as sensitivity and the conflict between reason and emotion.

Another important sub-component of this section was the denial of multiple patterns in girls. In defence of gender identity, it would destroy plurality and individuality, and seek to create an ideal type. In fact, it could not include the individual

differences of girls with a comprehensive definition of this identity. This theme was found in sentences like: "There are things that women can do better. For example, designing clothes and being a school or a kindergarten teacher needs subtleties that men generally lack".

## 2.1. Reducing women's position to physical and executive affairs

The themes extracted to answer the second question showed that women's position at home was reduced to performing executive and physical tasks. This was frequently emphasized by the codes: "The girls of the groom's family were as if they were all housewives with a thousand arts. Their cooking was fabulous!"; "Although the groom's family loved their daughter-in-law and were kind to her, they expected her to be like them and sometimes give them a hand at parties"; "For some of the responsibilities such as housekeeping, there is no requirement or compulsion from the outside. If any woman cannot fulfil those responsibilities well, she may not only feel weak, but also anxious and stressed, and may possibly lose her husband's love to some extent". On the other hand, the dignity of regulating the emotions and wills of the family members by women and girls was somewhat weak. In addition, since the authors' view of women's capabilities was probably indicative of a kind of backwardness and weakness, these natural female attributes were limited to home and were not able to show their presence in political and social arenas. The questions were "what happens to women's capabilities and their special functions in the political and social arena? Do women and girls lack special roles based on natural characteristics in political and social life and in general, life and historical movements?"

However, dominant themes were those that constantly encouraged women's position at home to perform executive and physical tasks. In this regard, some negative descriptions of the girls who did not help their mothers with housework were presented and then they were invited to help with household chores. According to Shariah and Jurisprudence, it is not the duty of women to do executive affairs of the house, and all family members should be included, with the addition that due to their special position in the family, women sometimes use such executive affairs (e.g. cooking, decorations, etc.) to manage the family atmosphere. In this regard, it seems that the policymakers were influenced by customary and cultural notions.

Even though invitation to be involved in household affairs was the positive theme of the sentences included in the book, restricting women to housework and considering it as their duty contained a gender perspective. In the book, it was assumed that housework was on the mother, and in her absence, her daughter should do the housework; therefore, helping with these tasks should only be done by females. This definition is well described in the following sentence:

"In case a guest arrives, the mother feels relieved because she knows that things will be easier for her with the presence of her daughter. When the mother sees the house sparkling with cleanliness, she says to herself: *My daughter has grown up to a lady! If I want to go on a trip, I can rely on my daughter and I won't need to tell the grandmother to stay with the children until I return.*"

In this textbook, the themes related to inviting everyone to participate in physical housework, which sometimes meant doing individual work of other family members, such as washing clothes and putting away personal belongings, could be found in only one sentence: "Of course, helping with housework is not only on girls, and boys and men also have some

duties". Nevertheless, the dominant idea was that it was the females' duty. Although women's employment policies emphasized the cooperation of family members for proper management of household affairs, the need of men for women was also related to housework. This could be derived from sentences like: "The taste of home-made food is totally different".

## 2.2. Confirming hierarchical relationship between men and women

In another sentence, women's position at home was directly presented lower than that of men. In this attitude, there was a look down on women. It believed in the existence of a hierarchical relationship between couples and invited women to be lower than men: "It is socially important that boys are not lower than girls. It means that according to the social values governing you and your family, a son should not be of low status and should not be considered a low-value son-in-law". This looking down on women and their inferiority to men was against the 20<sup>th</sup> principle of the Constitution, which considers men and women to have equal human, social, and political rights.

## 3.1. Integrating women's identity in marriage (encouraging marriage)

The codes extracted from the content of the textbook based on the answer to the position of marriage in women's identity also showed that women's identity was integrated in marriage, and unmarried women were creatures without identity. Hence, this kind of identity integration encouraged marriage. In this attitude, popular terms that defined the value of girls in marriage were used as well: "Rezvan Khanum says: If your daughter doesn't want to marry, you can pickle her."

This theme was evident in many other sentences: "Peace for a girl means marrying a man who relieves her pains"; "Perhaps at first the family won't easily deal with your marriage, but be sure that your marriage is one of the most important concerns of your parents, and as you get older, this concern turns into a sadness for them". So, the value and priority of girls were shown in marriage, and a girl's future happiness and prosperity was considered dependent on marriage. This theme was stated explicitly and, on the contrary, a gender perspective described the future happiness and prosperity of a boy in the process of finding a job: "Many boys will have a clearer life path after finding a stable job, but it will occur to many girls after marriage".

In this section, there was an important sub-component that completely rejected unmarried girls in order to integrate girls' identity in marriage. Celibacy was strongly condemned and the book completely negated this lifestyle by using negative literature about celibacy. It seems that the policymakers were not able to distinguish between celibacy due to reprehensible individualism and due to many valid reasons. In this regard, the following sentences were included: "Also, marriage gives you a social identity and improves your social relationships. For this reason, the society gives higher status and more respect to married people, and they have better social positions."; "The census in 2016 showed that by that year, there were more than one million four hundred thousand unmarried girls over the age of thirty in the country, and it is natural that as time passes, their marriage will be more difficult. This is a social harm and the society seems to have realized its danger".

This rejection also caused contradictions in identity definitions. In some parts of the book, there was a slogan saying that

girls were the warmth of families "It is the girl who, with her kindness, can reduce the discomforts and disputes at home. She can freshen the house and change its atmosphere with her girlish elegance". But if the girl was not married, she would be considered a source of embarrassment: "On the other hand, if the person gets older and she is not married, she will have a sense of disturbance and burden in the family over time. Even the family's concern about their unmarried daughter is sometimes expressed in the form of blaming her."

In line with the condemnation of celibacy and invitation to marriage, the book provided recommendations for suitors to come and prepare the conditions for marriage. The recommendations are as follows.

"Show your qualifications. People are not selected unless their merits are obvious to others. So, increase your qualifications. Improve your skills, and most importantly work on your personal and social ethics. Participate in healthy gatherings such as family and friend parties, cultural programs, and educational environments."

This kind of theme considers a girl as a person who is always looking for marriage, and describes her personal growth and moral quality improvement as a means of finding a suitor and getting married. Although general policies of families emphasize the facilitation of marriage and the rejection of celibacy, the book has gone beyond the negation and has completely rejected celibacy in such a way that no identity has been given to a single girl.

### 3.2. Dichotomization between social activities and marriage of women

The book made a dichotomy between marriage and other dimensions of women's identity. An example is the dichotomy between social activities and marriage. In this regard, one side of the dichotomy was negated in any way, and studying and having social activities were mainly destroyed in favour of marriage.

"You don't know what misfortunes I went through for the entrance exam until I was accepted in the field of my choice, and then with what pressure I passed each and every course. In those few years, I had good suitors, but I was so busy with my studies that I couldn't think about marriage".

However, a few sentences attempted to moderate this dichotomy by inviting the students to marry. Furthermore, some men who hindered their wives' education were criticized in one sentence. Although in these sentences, the dichotomy between marriage and education was tried to be moderated, the audience could not ultimately see marriage as a part of her community life and personal mission. Marriage is good in an outward and superficial way, but its deep epistemological foundations are unknown. The representation of marriage in the textbook contradicted the participation in the historical movement and social influence, and if a girl accepted both, she would split her existence. Hence, she had to prefer one to the other. In this dichotomy, too, the author was influenced by conventional ideas and could not help the audience in solving the problem. In this type of marriage, the woman would have a traditional role and the book considered the ideal woman to be socially inactive and do the housework: "Like in the Iranian culture where housekeeping skills such as managing the house, cooking, hosting, raising children, etc. are the signs of an ideal housewife, other countries of Asia, Africa, Europe, America, and Oceania have the same culture as well."

#### 4.1. Dichotomization between the presence of women in public and family arenas

Most of the codes related to the fourth question were in the final chapter of the book. The fourth question dealt with how the role of women in the social and political arena was addressed. In general, the extracted codes showed that women's right to property and employment was recognized: "Women's right to property and employment is explicitly stated in Qur'an ". However, criticizing the problems and challenges of women in the modern employment structure moved towards a dichotomy between social and political activities.

In this regard, the book referred to some benefits of women's employment, such as helping with expenses, while emphasizing their household duties, and presented some jobs that was believed to be suitable for women: "Some jobs meet the needs of women's society and it is better for women to do them. For example, legal and psychological issues of female clients are better understood by female specialists". In addition to ignoring the multiple talents of women, this view failed to show different needs of the society to them. Such a division of women's social presence was also used in women's employment policies, so that Article 5 of the document presented 4 categories of women's jobs. The challenge of this ambiguous division was in determining the examples of each category. This is despite the fact that in the Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities, the right to military occupations was listed among women's rights. However, the harsh example in employment policies could also be assigned to military jobs mentioned in the Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities. This concern regarding women's employment was clearly evident in the upstream documents, and in the textbook, such a minimal view of women's presence in public and social arena led to the exclusion and diminution of women.

Although this division paid attention to women's gender identity, it recognized the male structure by default and categorized women's jobs accordingly. General policies and laws about women also emphasized guiding women in accepting social roles along with maternal roles. Some codes criticized the working conditions of women. Paying attention to working conditions based on women's maternal needs along with their employment policies was also mentioned in Article 107 of the Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities.

In the last part of the book, an attempt was made to promote the value of domestic work by economically evaluating it. However, this kind of valuation also dichotomized employment and homemaking: "If a woman has a plan to reduce expenses and manage them without losing any of her tenderness, she has made a more worthy contribution to the family economy." Even though cost management was a valuable issue, giving it priority over employment and social activities would strengthen the dichotomy between social activities and housekeeping. Paying attention to cost management and optimal consumption by women at home was also mentioned in paragraph 8 of the second strategy of family excellence policies, and in this regard, it was compliant with the upstream documents.

#### 4.2. Prioritization of women's family role over social activities

Although the book initially tried to call the society to improve working conditions for the benefit of women and to some extent considered employment as one of the women's rights, it finally favoured homemaking and considered employment as a minor priority of women. According to the book, the main responsibility of a woman was only within the framework of

her family life. It assumed the meaning of employment as a modern and organizational job and the meaning of home as traditional housekeeping in which a woman had to be always at home: "Sometimes a woman tires herself so much in her work environment that all her energy is depleted and she only needs to renew her strength at home so that she can go to work the next day refreshed. If this situation continues, the woman will not get enough benefit from her family".

This is also mentioned at the beginning of the employment policies. The beginning of the document emphasizes the role of women in families and considers housekeeping as the main duty of women. However, women's employment policies emphasize the necessity of employment and creating job opportunities for women. In addition, Article 101 of the Charter of Women's Rights and Responsibilities considered women's right to employment as well. A woman's role at home is irreplaceable, but basically, the conflict between a woman's employment and her role at home is not fixed; rather, this equation will not be solved equally for everyone. The main issue is that the policymakers wanted to honor women's household activities by opposing and denying non-family activities, which would sometimes lead to an opposite result.

In line with prioritization of housework, another condition for women's employment was the agreement of their husbands: "When a woman's job is accompanied by her husband's full agreement, it can be considered a help for life; but if the man is unwilling, more serious harm will be done to the family". Although this issue was stated under the general title of agreement and companionship, the man's agreement was interpreted as confirming. Confirmation is different from agreement and partnership, and in the intended sense by the book (man's approval), the woman would take a marginal role and the man would practically decide what to do. It seems that this approach to the relationship between men and women regarding employment is rooted at the Civil Law, in which Article 1117 states that "A husband can prohibit his wife from a profession or industry that is against their family interests or his or her dignity. Considering the legalization of this right for men and the expansion of its limits by using the words *family interests and man's dignity*, agreement and partnership would not be applicable. Rather, they would be more in the sense of determining and assigning tasks from an upstream perspective.

In another part of the textbook, there was clearly a comparison between a woman who had a job and a woman who was only engaged in housework, and the term "housewife" was interpreted as being at home and not having public activities: "Work pressure as well as hard work and financial problems can overshadow a woman's vitality, beauty, and freshness. Nevertheless, there are many women who give up these benefits in order to be their husbands' economic helpers or bother to work hard for other reasons. This is while nothing is reduced from their household duties. In contrast, housewives are usually at home and in most cases, they will receive more financial and emotional support from their husbands. But working women will have to use their income to pay for the expenses". Using a negative theme, the author believed that a working woman would benefit less from her husband's emotional support. Therefore, even though the book tried to consider employment as the right of women, it initially limited it to some special jobs, and ultimately gave priority to the family role of women and provided a negative representation of social activities.

## Conclusion

According to the analysis of the content of “Family Management and Lifestyle” textbook, the main research question could be answered as follows: the policymakers and the authors of the book had a worried attitude toward the identity of girls and women, and they tried to solve this problem by relying on the traditional reading about women. The traditional and eastern reading, whose nostalgia could be well felt in the texts and codes reviewed, showed a secondary image of women with specific and limited functions.

The policymakers realized the importance of the issue of women and gender identity, and being aware of this concern, they tried to stand up against the approaches that sought equality and denied the identity of women and girls. They sometimes used the literature of honouring and celebrating women, and sometimes it turned to weak-minded and consoling literature. For instance, a woman's identity in this attitude was well integrated within family, and before the formation of the family, she could not be counted on as a normal member of the society. A woman was not an independent member of the society unless she belonged to a family and worked under its umbrella. After the formation of the family, she was again merged into the family and served it. In general, it was concluded that the authors of the book assigned the main roles in human movement to men and considered women to serve men. Although the literature of the book was not humiliating and domineering, a less respectful representation was used. Thus, the expression and tone of the book was not derogatory and it was tried to show such a hierarchical position as attractive and honourable to the readers. Examining these themes in the upstream documents and laws also showed that an evident girlhood identity gap in these policies, and there was encouragement and contradictions in the issue of marriage, definition of motherhood and wifehood, and attending the public arena such as employment and education.

The result of such an attitude, which was increasingly exposed to the audience, was the identity crisis. The gap in the Iranian women's empirical reality and the promotion of retrogressive and eastern ideas about them caused girls to lose their identity or turn to modern patterns. Numerous studies confirmed the results of this type of attitude. The gap between the contents of other textbooks and the reality of the society was mentioned in some other research results (Kardan et al). The results of this research showed that depicting the traditional role of women in textbooks, who were always doing household chores, and negating their social and political roles caused a gender identity crisis among girls, and they felt dissatisfied with their gender. The research by Hazeri and Pourkhorrami also showed that in this book, the social role and presence of women in various literary and historical fields were ignored and women were poorly represented in the book. The findings of the present research also presented the fact that in the current days, women were active in various literary and scientific fields. Besides, the inadequacy of the content of the textbook with this fact was criticized, and it was emphasized that women's social dimension should be taken into account.

In this regard, the study by Irfan Ahmad showed that female students made a relationship with such textbooks with different ideas and gender identities. Therefore, teachers, course designers, and policy makers had to know what aspects of an educational program might conflict or complement different identities of the students.

In addition, the research by Yazdi, Zare et al showed that the upstream laws and documents on the issue of gender roles, especially with regard to the requirements of the modern world such as women's employment, women's education, democratization of families in the world, the importance of raising children, the greater presence of mass media and



virtual space in life, etc., were neglected. They also criticized the one-sided emphasis of women on their maternal and marital roles.

On the other hand, ignoring the individual and social talents and abilities of girls during their gender identity education made them unable to use their abilities to prepare for playing a proper social role. This consequence was more evident in the educational content that used gender stereotypes (Gillis). Furthermore, the textbooks that introduced men and women as gender stereotypes could not help the development of students' critical thinking (Atay and Danju).

Therefore, it could be pointed out that the main problem and challenge regarding the ineffectiveness of these policies was the lack of a clear definition of girls' identity and a special look at women. This gap also existed in upstream documents and policies. In other words, some themes of the book were in line with the upstream documents and in some other cases, the lack of the content of such documents was evident in the textbook. Due to the prevalence of such an attitude, the "Family Management and Lifestyle" book for girls was considered an ineffective cultural and educational policy, because presenting such a one-sided and weak image of women's maternal and marital roles and removing them from the public arena would not encourage girls to accept the family role. Rather, instead of using more attractive alternatives such as social and occupational roles, it made the view of girls negative towards maternal and marital roles.

Considering the negative consequences of the policymakers' attitude, it is important to rethink the attitude of policymakers and the dominant discourse. Although the traditional discourse about women recognizes and respects maternal and marital roles, denying the very important aspects of girlhood has made it unable to promote and reproduce the value of these roles for the younger generation. Therefore, it is appropriate to compile school textbooks with up-to-date attitudes, and upstream documents should address this issue more accurately.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The speech of Ayatollah Khamenei, the leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the meeting of the members of the Women's Cultural-Social Council on 11/05/1996

<sup>2</sup> In the 546th meeting of the Cultural Revolution, dated 22/09/2004, at the suggestion of the Women's Cultural and Social Council (letter No. 1259/SHZ dated 3/24/2004), the charter of women's rights and responsibilities in Islamic Republic of Iran was approved

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