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'Islamic Culture' textbook content and religious needs of literacy students

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The present study aimed to investigate the degree of adaptation of the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content to the religious needs of the literacy learners, using document and content analysis as the main research method. The statistical population for the document analysis included all texts related to the religious needs of the literacy learners, and the 'Islamic Culture' textbook was examined in the content analysis section. The research tools were composed of some forms and a content analysis checklist. Furthermore, the documents were analysed qualitatively, and the data from the content analysis were examined, using the descriptive indicators in the Shannon entropy for data analysis. The study results revealed that the conceptual framework of the religious needs among the literacy learners could be classified into three dimensions, namely; cognitive, emotional and functional, and then divided into several components. According to the expert opinions, there was no correlation between the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content and the dimensions of the religious needs of the literacy learners. The levels of attention to the religious needs in such learners in the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content was also not the same, so that the most emphasis had been laid on the cognitive dimension and the least weight was placed on the functional one.

Contribution: This study was to identify the dimensions and components of the religious needs of the literacy learners. For this purpose, three dimensions and 58 components were categorised for the religious needs, using document and content analysis as well as data collection tools for searching the related literature in books, journals, databases and websites.

Keywords: religious needs; Islamic Culture book; education; Islamic educational environment; Islam; religion.

Introduction

Religious thinkers and educators are often concerned about teaching a new generation with the blessings of religious education, ones who believe in values and moral virtues. If the people build their lives on the orbit of religion, happiness and health will be evident in all political and sociocultural dimensions of the society (Tajbakhsh & Mousavi 2018). Considering the importance and necessity of religious education, it refers to 'the aspect of education that oversees the development of cognitive, emotional, and functional dimensions of educators in terms of their respect for particular religions' (Kiumarsi 2013). On the other hand, with much focus on the functional dimension, religious education includes 'the growth and strengthening of religious beliefs, moods, and emotions, along with the imitation of religious rituals and customs for the realisation of a religious personality' (Sharafi & Sharafi 2013). Therefore, religious education, as a special education that originates from religion and inextricably links with the teachings of religion, has a territory as wide as all human life aspects (Yazdkhasti, Babaei Fard & Kiani 2018).

In this study, the religious needs represent those to gain knowledge about religious beliefs, issues and teachings accompanied by thinking and insight that lead to conscious religious practices and behaviours. In this way, the educational system is one that plays the main role in meeting such needs by various tools, such as educators, educational resources, teaching aids and curricula, in the form of many educational structures and courses. Among the organisations in the structure of the Iranian educational system, operating actively in the field of adult education, is the state-run Literacy

Note: HTS Historical Thought and Source Interpretation.

TABLE 1: Identifying the dimensions of the religious needs of the literacy learners (research findings).

Dimensions	Components	Sources
Cognitive	Familiarity with other religions, research methods for the study of religion, debate principles, ability to compare piety of presence and abstinence, analysis of religious issues, critique of religious issues, familiarity with the life of divine prophets, knowledge of nearness to God, knowledge of Islamic rules necessary for life, understanding the concept of piety, abstinence, a paternalistic model of the life of divine prophets, life expectancy, work conscience, understanding of sin.	Sharafi and Sharafi (2013), Bagheri (2002), Karimi (2012), Keshavarz (2009), Norouzi (2010), Salahshour (2013), Samadi and MehrMohammadi (2011), MirArefin (2015), Tavakoli (2008), Asadi (2014), Maleki (2011), Manteghi (2009), Davari (2009), Salehi and YarAhmadi (2009), Kiumarsi (2013), Mahmoudi (2017), Turan (2020).
Emotional	Feeling of commitment to responsibility, interest in approaching God, interest in doing good deeds, interest in respecting the rights of others, bad feelings about sin, belief in the resurrection and just punishment of humans.	Faramarzi and Abedini (2014), Ajam and Saeedi Rezvani (2013), Khaleghkhah and Masoudi (2012), Manteghi (2009), Sadeghzadeh Ghamsari (2012), Elliott et al. (2018), Turi et al. (2020), Starykh and Sviridova (2017).
Functional	Participating in religious marches, working in the field of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, memorising and reciting narrations and verses, participating in Friday prayers, performing acts of repentance, observing privacy in male–female relationships, observing the rights of others, performing the duty of first-time prayer, self-control, the ability to prove *Imamate*.	Ajam and Saeedi Rezvani (2013), Faramarzi and Abedini (2014), Sharafi and Sharafi (2013), Mahmoudi (2017), Davari (2009), Hemmat Banari (2001), Garnett (2020), Anderson, Knoll and Tyra (2020), Danilova (2017), Gavrilova (2016), Sierk (2016), Ivanova et al. (2020).

Movement Organization (LMO), established in 1979 upon the order of Imam Khomeini, as the first supreme leader of Iran, to teach reading and writing skills to adults and children who do not have access to schooling in deprived areas.

One of the most important learning resources in any educational system, including the LMO, is the textbooks used to achieve various educational and sociocultural goals. Considering that the main audience of the LMO programmes is the illiterate and low-literate individuals aged between 10 and 49 years, it is necessary to adapt the educational content (namely, the textbooks) and different programmes to their interests, and meet their religious needs. The fact is that the educational activities should be tailored to learners' needs and interests. Otherwise, they feel discouraged, and the effectiveness of the educational programmes is reduced. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to reflect on the educational content and textbooks for such learners (Saklakova 2014). In this line, paying much attention to the learners' religious needs and interests as well as examining and explaining such needs and providing appropriate methods to create desire to learn and change are the main problems facing the educational system in general and the LMO in particular.

One of the textbooks to meet the religious needs of the literacy learners is the 'Islamic Culture', published by the LMO of Qom Province, Iran. Given the importance of the educational content in this course, this study aimed to analyse the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content according to the religious needs of the literacy learners. These reviews and analyses could thus help planners, authors and experts involved in adult textbook development to make the best

decisions when preparing, editing, or selecting their content. As this study was to investigate the degree of the adaptation of the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content to the religious needs of the literacy learners, the following research questions were addressed:

- What are the dimensions and components of the religious needs of the literacy learners?
- What is the validity of the dimensions and components of the religious needs based on expert opinions?
- To what extent does the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content correspond to the dimensions and components of the religious needs of the literacy learners?

Religious needs in educational systems

Humans deserved to reach all divine perfections, so they were created to become God's caliph on the Earth. In order for someone to reach such a position, they need to walk on the path of religion and grow towards it. In this way, different people and groups as guides can educate them in the path of religion, raise them up, or move them further away from their destination in the non-religious path. The educational environment is accordingly one of the factors investigated for this purpose, which might affect the religious education of people (Mahmoudi 2017) (Table 1).

Considering the dimensions of human existence, education in all religious and moral dimensions is not an easy task. Therefore, it is necessary to coordinately educate people with regard to all factors influencing education at the school and university levels and even beyond them. The aim of the sending of prophets is also the happiness of human beings, as stated in the holy books, especially the Holy Qur'an. Regarding the importance of religious education, 124 000 prophets were sent to deal with this issue. In addition, the Prophet of Islam was chosen among the righteous people (Surah Al-Jumu'ah, Ayat 9), so that people could reach happiness. In today's society, the educational environment has an important place in the education of people and can help them perform their activities in this field in positive or negative directions. Therefore, it seems crucial to examine the way religious education is conducted at schools and universities along with its possible harms.

Education also has various definitions in different religions and schools, but it generally means picking the right behaviour and speech, creating the necessary conditions and factors, and helping the person being educated to realise one's hidden talents in all dimensions of existence and grow harmoniously, flourish and gradually move towards the desired goal and perfection, in the field of Islamic culture. Religious education further implies providing the background for learning and applying logical and philosophical principles, so that learners can understand religious issues and form their beliefs based on religious beliefs and their actions in keeping with its instructions. Beliefs accordingly constitute a part of the Islamic religion; therefore, the religiousness of

a Muslim person is complete and accepted if there is no disbelief (Surah An-Nasa, Ayat 136). Furthermore, part of the important functions of religion today lies in dependence on beliefs and their results. Giving meaning to life, pain and suffering, such as loneliness, having the feeling of being oppressed and a sense of injustice and eliminating the fear of death, can be just fulfilled by religion. Moreover, believing in Islamic beliefs is to adhere to other orders of Islam. That is, if someone does not believe so, they will never comply with the orders of Islam. Therefore, religious education needs to precede moral and devotional one.

So far, much attention has been paid to ethics in Islam, because morality can make life more beautiful for individuals and society. From this perspective, a society is not assumed to be religious, wherein people do not recognise their responsibilities, are not kind to each other, everyone thinks about one's own interests and pleasures, and do not observe justice. Individual and social progress will not thus occur in such a society. Religious ethics and following God's commands in a correct and stable way accordingly shows a firm faith, makes the society dynamic, and brings justice in all aspects. The acts of worship are actually the appearance of religion, and represent its beautiful interior (Nik Nishan, Pak Sarasate & Liaqat Dar 2015). Human religious education is thus possible according to the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions. In the cognitive dimension, it is possible to educate people and raise their information and awareness in relation to the principles of belief, ethics and rules. Knowledge also has some stages and degrees. Retaining religious knowledge does not lead to religious education. What is important at the early stages is the understanding of knowledge and the ability to apply it in life. Considering the emotional dimension, it is possible to motivate people to act by arousing their feelings and emotions. Then, the behavioural dimension shows itself and the person cultivates moral virtues in the field of action and adheres to the rules of religion. This is where they reach ultimate perfection and become the obedient servants of God, as the goal of religious education (Mohammadvand et al. 2014).

Human personality is further formed under the influence of various internal factors, such as will, nature and heredity as well as external factors, including family, school, media, and so on. The indispensable important role of family in the field of children's religious education is undeniable, but children spend many years at schools, as their second family, and then at university. Therefore, it is vital to educate them in a correct and religious way. In the educational environment, each component, including teacher, textbook, classmate, principal and even school staff are in contact with students, so it is expected that all these factors are effective in their thoughts, speech and actions. Furthermore, curricula usually inculcate special cognitions, knowledge, attitudes, values and behaviours to students. If there is no place for religious education in the curricula of schools and mere attention is paid to the scientific and professional training, the idea that religion and religious teachings are not as valuable as professions, such as carpentry and construction, is instilled in students. On the other hand, schools may engage in religious education, but firstly teach some aspects of religion, and secondly consider religious education as a secondary and unimportant subject. In this case, students deem that religion is not very important, and addressed only to do one's homework (Hosseinzadeh & Mashrafe 2010).

Among textbooks, the religious ones are of great magnitude. The existence of diversity in the content of textbooks, using the works of original writers and thinkers as well as consultations with students themselves to choose the religious course materials can thus give the confidence that the religious class is not to impose a predetermined doctrine. In this regard, students can be polled. Several types of textbooks compiled for this purpose can thus expand students' choices, so that they look at the religious textbook as a holy one, and do not think of it as a book full of outdated issues that are not applicable in today's world. Moreover, no familiarity with contemporary religious studies among the planners and authors of religious books, and the new changes and developments that have taken place in the field of religious studies is another serious harm in planning for the educational content. The content of textbooks is also called an explicit curriculum (Shamshiri 2007), designed in advance, wherein the students are taught accordingly to the same extent. Besides, textbooks act like teachers and educate students towards predetermined goals. It seems that some textbooks are empty of educational concepts and have nothing to do with religion and religious education. Everyone has the idea that the task of educating students is only the responsibility of religious teachers, religious books and the Holy Qur'an. Insufficient attention to religious teachings or the lack of proper connections between the lesson content and the religious teachings is also harmful. If the contents of the textbooks are such that their specialised contents are logically coordinated and related to all aspects of religion, and they deal with the religious, moral and devotional education of students in addition to teaching the basic sciences, the grounds will be paved for religious education (Ramzazadeh & Mirshah Jafari 2017).

Religious books and the Holy Qur'an have more opportunity and capacity in inducing religious concepts. Therefore, they can be more specialised in the religious education of students. The heavy literature of religious books also makes the lesson boring, but the variety of topics can reduce their dryness. Paying attention to students' needs and interests in topics and using their opinions in the design of courses can be thus a smart thing. Presenting examples of religious personalities as well as great and well-known thinkers who are accepted by students can thus increase their confidence in the materials and reveal their importance. Memorising the definitions and messages of the verses cannot further lead to religious education, but the induction of concepts, such as divine love and wrath, divine justice, and truth and truthfulness of the Prophet of Islam can arouse students' feelings and create love for the principles of faith, ethics and commandments, which result in the heartfelt acceptance of faith in students (Arafi & Shahamat 2013).

Methodology

In this study, document and content analysis along with a survey method were used. For this purpose, firstly, texts, books and documents were analysed using document analysis for extracting the components of the religious needs. Then, in the survey method, the given components were provided in the form of a matrix table to 35 experts in theological studies and asked to prioritise the most important religious needs of the literacy learners. Finally, the level of attention to these extracted components was investigated by content analysis. The statistical population during document analysis included all texts related to religious education. In the survey section, there were 30 university professors in theological studies involved in the universities in the city of Tehran, Iran (including Shahed University, Shahid Beheshti University, Allameh Tabataba'i University and Shahid Rajaei University). The sample in the content analysis section was the 'Islamic Culture' textbook, published by the LMO of Qom Province, Iran.

The research instrument in the document analysis included datasheets. In the survey section, a self-administered matrix table was utilised, and a self-administered checklist was used for content analysis. In order to test the validity of the given instruments, content validity was measured by eliciting the expert opinions. To ensure the reliability of the instruments, the re-implementation technique and Cronbach's alpha coefficient were employed in the content analysis and survey sections, respectively.

Findings

To address the first research question, the related texts, articles and books about the religious needs were examined, and then the dimensions of the religious needs of the literacy learners were obtained. Each component was described separately:

- **Cognitive dimension:** Cognitive goals are those dealing with the recall or recognition of knowledge and the development of mental abilities and skills. The word 'cognitive' here refers to a mental perception that can be transmitted verbally to another.
- **Emotional dimension:** The given dimension contains the development of values, attitudes and beliefs. Emotional learning goals also put emphasis on feelings, excitement, or the degree of acceptance or rejection. They are further expressed as interests, attitudes, appreciations, or values, and include different levels from simple to complex attention to the inner qualities of personality and conscience.
- **Functional dimension:** Psychomotor skills refer to the development of skills and competencies in the application of technologies. This area takes account of activities that are movement-based and require a degree of physical coordination; in other words, the goals underline a number of muscular or motor skills (Seif 2020).

After analysing the dimensions and components of the religious needs through document analysis and reviewing the research literature in the reputable journals, databases and websites, a matrix table was provided to 30 experts in theological studies, and then they were asked to prioritise the most important aspects of the religious foundations in terms of importance from 1 to 14, according to their knowledge and expertise. Finally, the data were calculated through the Friedman test, given in Table 2. In view of that, from the perspective of Iranian religious education experts, the functional dimension was ranked the highest and the cognitive dimension was placed on the lowest rank.

Upon identifying the dimensions and components of the religious needs of the literacy learners through the document analysis, the most significant components of the religious needs were obtained from the expert opinions. Afterward, the extent of these dimensions and components was addressed in the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content via content analysis. The data in respect of addressing the third research question were further analysed and described in the Shannon Entropy for data analysis (namely, normalising the frequency table data, calculating the information load of the categories, and obtaining their coefficient of importance). Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6 show the results of the dimension frequency associated with the religious needs of the literacy learners, separately and collectively.

According to Table 6, the total frequency of the components of the religious needs of the literacy learners in the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content is 371. Among the dimensions of the religious needs of these learners, most attention was paid

TABLE 2: Validation of the dimensions of the religious needs in expert opinions (research findings).

Ranks	Dimensions	Mean	Frequency	Test statistics	Confidence interval
1	Cognitive	6.12			
2	Emotional	8.23	27	6.54	0.006
3	Functional	9.42			

TABLE 3: Degree of adaptation of the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content to cognitive dimension (research findings).

Dimensions	Components	Frequency	%
Cognitive	Familiarity with other religions	12	7.84
	Research methods for the study of religion	8	5.22
	Debate principles	5	3.26
	Ability to compare the piety of presence and abstinence	3	1.96
	Analysis of religious issues	9	5.88
	Critique of religious issues	14	9.15
	Familiarity with the life of divine prophets	21	13.72
	Knowledge of nearness to God	10	6.53
	Knowledge of Islamic rules necessary for life	17	11.11
	Understanding the concept of piety abstinence	5	3.26
	A paternalistic model of the life of divine prophets	11	7.18
	Life expectancy	4	2.61
	Work conscience	3	1.96
	Understanding of sin	8	5.22
	Sum	**130**	**-**

TABLE 4: Degree of adaptation of the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content to emotional dimension (research findings).

Dimensions	Components	Frequency	%
Emotional	Interest in approaching God	31	33.69
	Interest in doing good deeds	19	20.65
	Interest in respecting the rights of others	15	16.30
	Bad feelings about guilt	9	9.78
	Belief in the resurrection	11	11.95
	Just punishment of human	7	7.60
	Sum	**92**	**-**

TABLE 5: Degree of adaptation of the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content to functional dimension (research findings).

Dimensions	Components	Frequency	%
Functional	Participating in religious marches	4	3.17
	Memorising and reciting narrations and verses	5	3.96
	Participating in Friday prayer	3	2.38
	Performing acts of repentance	7	5.55
	Respect for privacy in male-female relationships	11	8.73
	Respecting the rights of others	14	11.11
	Performing the duty of first-time prayer	4	3.17
	Continence	9	7.14
	Ability to prove Imamate	3	2.38
	Knowledge of Islamic rules necessary for life	9	7.14
	Understanding the concept of piety abstinence	5	3.96
	A paternalistic model of the life of divine prophets	18	14.28
	Life expectancy	4	3.17
	Work conscience	2	1.58
	Understanding of sin	7	5.55
	Sum	**101**	**-**

TABLE 6: Results of the components of the religious needs of the literacy learners in the 'Islamic Culture' textbook (research findings).

Dimensions	Frequency	%
Cognitive	153	41.23
Emotional	92	24.79
Functional	126	33.96
Sum	**371**	**-**

to the cognitive dimension and the least attention was to the emotional one.

Conclusion

The first research question here was to identify the dimensions and components of the religious needs of the literacy learners. In this part, three dimensions (namely, cognitive, emotional and functional) and 58 components were identified for the religious needs, using document analysis and data collection tools by searching the research literature in books, journals, databases and websites. Each dimension comprised some components, that is the cognitive dimension included familiarity with other religions, research methods for the study of religion, characteristics of a good jihadist, debate principles, ability to compare piety of presence and abstinence, analysis of religious issues, familiarity with the concept of Mahdism, critique of religious issues, familiarity with the life of divine prophets, knowledge of nearness to

TABLE 7: The amount of normalised data, information load and importance factor of the dimensions (research findings).

Islamic Culture textbook	Cognitive	Emotional	Functional
Normalised data	0.216	0.167	0.098
Ej	0.612	0.381	0.532
Wj	0.401	0.232	0.350

God, knowledge of Islamic rules necessary for life, understanding the concept of piety, abstinence, a paternalistic model of life of divine prophets, life expectancy, work conscience as well as understanding of sin. By comparing the findings with those in previous studies, some components in previous research had been selected and examined as the components of the religious needs. For example, Galtash, Ramezani Sadeh and Zareh (2018) had identified and prioritised the educational needs of the literacy learners under the auspices of the LMO of Fars Province, Iran, via a mixed-methods research design. In this study, the religious needs of the literacy learners had been grouped into three main categories of knowledge, attitudes and skills, along with their subcategories. Considering the category of knowledge, there were four dimensions of sociocultural, scientific, spiritual (namely, religious and ethical) and health-related. In the category of attitudes, two subcategories of individual and social attitudes existed. In addition, three subcategories of basic life skills, practical skills and learning skills had been examined in the category of skills, as the educational needs of the literacy learners. Turani (2015) had also reflected on the educational needs and interests of literate and illiterate students, aged between 10–49, and categorised educational interests and needs in three dimensions, namely, knowledge, attitudes and skills.

After identifying the dimensions and components of the religious needs of the literacy learners, the results to answer the second research question showed that among the three dimensions of religious needs (namely, cognitive, emotional and functional) in the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content, most emphasis had been laid on the cognitive, emotional and functional dimensions, resepectively (Table 7). In the knowledge dimension, the greatest emphasis was on familiarity with the concept of *Mahdism* and knowledge of Islamic rules necessary for life. In the emotional dimension, the greatest emphasis was on the components of interest in approaching God, interest in doing good deeds and interest in respecting the rights of others. In the functional dimension, the greatest emphasis was on the activities in the field of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, a paternalistic model of the life of divine prophets, and respecting the rights of others.

This part of the study results was consistent with those of Aslanargun, Kiliç and Bozkurt (2014), Galtash et al. (2018), Dehghani, Ansari and Qaisar (2015), and Turani (2015). Based on their study findings, the least emphasis had been on the emotional and functional dimensions in the 'Islamic Culture' textbook content. The 5-year development plan was also unfavourable. Notably, functional literacy was not just about teaching reading, writing and basic math. Other basic aspects should be emphasised, such as cultural education and

awareness of individual and social rights as well as attitudes and practices. In their study, they had found that the attainment goals of the 5-year development plan, especially in the transition period, were not promising, which was in agreement with the results of the present study. Although there were positive attitudes towards literacy, such desirable feelings and attitudes had not yet been realised in the plans and contents presented to learners. In this way, it is necessary to pay much attention to such issues in the future. According to the study results, the following suggestions were provided:

- The needs identified in the present study, using document analysis, should be taken into consideration in developing the content for the literacy learners in the future.
- Based on the research findings in terms of addressing the first research question, it is suggested to communicate the dimensions and components of the religious needs of the literacy learners to other centres in the form of brochures, or hold workshops for educators to be acquainted with such dimensions and components.
- In connection with the LMO courses, needs assessment should be performed, so that relevant authorities are informed in a timely manner about the wishes, interests and needs of literate and adult learners.
- According to the findings of the present study, the dimensions and components obtained had been less considered in the 'Islamic Culture' textbook, which should be reviewed and corrected in its next editions.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

Authors' contributions

M.D.S. was involved in writing and reviewing. S.N. and H.V.L. were responsible for writing and draft. A.A.A.A.-S. performed visualisation. H.P. performed methodology, S.I.N. was involved in investigation, F.A.H.A.-K. performed conceptualisation and I.M. was responsible for validation.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards of research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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