

**ORIGINAL ARTICLE**

## The Development of Adolescents' Life Skills through Animation and Television Series, With Consideration of the Role of School Principals in Effective Utilization

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### ABSTRACT

In the contemporary world, adolescents are exposed to various media more than ever, and this exposure can play an important role in shaping their personality, emotional, and social dimensions. Therefore, purposeful use of media in informal life skills education has played a key role. The present study aimed to examine the extent and manner of representation of ten life skills in media content specifically designed for adolescents, and to propose strategies for school principals to utilize these media in educational programs. This research was conducted using a qualitative approach and qualitative content analysis method. To this end, the content of the Korean series "Bitch X Rich" and the animation "Inside Out 2" was analyzed and compared in terms of the representation of life skills, including self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, and coping with emotions and stress, across adolescents. The findings indicated that both media, despite differences in narrative style and target audience, have high potential in conveying social and emotional skills and can serve as effective complements to formal school education. Consequently, the conscious selection of media content and the design of educational programs based on it can help create a supportive learning environment and enhance students' life skills.

### KEYWORDS

Qualitative Content Analysis, Media Content, Adolescents, life Skills.



## Introduction

In contemporary society, adolescents are continuously exposed to diverse media that shape their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. As animations and television series constitute a major portion of their media consumption especially in Iran, where copyright limitations allow easy and low-cost access, examining the messages embedded in such content has become increasingly important (Bashir and Javaheri, 2017). Grounded in Social Learning Theory, adolescents often learn and imitate behaviors observed in media when these portrayals appear realistic or valuable (Dortaj and Khani, 2022), while Piaget's cognitive developmental framework suggests that their evolving reasoning abilities influence how they interpret media messages (Asadi, et al, 2016). Given media's strong capacity to influence adolescents' socialization particularly when critical awareness is limited, systematic content analysis of youth-oriented productions is essential (Bashir and Javaheri, 2017). Accordingly, the present study investigates the extent to which animations and series address components of life skills and explores how school principals utilize these media to enhance students' life-skills development, aiming to identify the key educational and developmental concepts conveyed to adolescents through such media.

## Methodology

The present study is qualitative and descriptive-analytical in nature, designed to examine the representation of life-skills components in visual media such as animations and television series targeted at adolescents. A qualitative content-analysis approach was employed as the primary method of data collection and analysis, as it enables the identification of patterns, concepts, and both explicit and implicit messages related to life skills within media texts. The research population consisted of popular adolescent-oriented series and animations selected for their educational value and audience appeal. The sample included a set of media productions chosen based on criteria of popularity and their potential for educational contribution to adolescent development. In this study, qualitative content analysis was conducted on the selected animations and series, with scenes, dialogues, and characters' actions serving as the units of analysis. Consequently, the data were derived solely from media content rather than from individuals' perspectives or experiences, and no quotations from human participants were incorporated.

For data collection, the researcher examined the content of the selected series and animations and extracted information relevant to life-skills components. The analysis centered on ten core life skills: self-awareness, empathy, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, problem-solving, creative thinking, critical thinking, coping with emotions, and stress management. Data analysis proceeded in several stages: media content was first coded according to these ten skills; the findings were then categorized based on the same life-skills framework. Each section of the media content was coded, similar examples and educational messages were grouped, and recurring patterns were identified, enabling the development of theoretical strategies for school principals. Ultimately, the results of the content analysis were interpreted to propose practical strategies for school administrators to effectively integrate visual media into educational programs and enhance students' life-skills development.

## Results

"Bitch X Rich" and "Inside Out 2" both focus on adolescence, tackling identity crises, psychological pressures, and the impact of environment, yet employ fundamentally different narrative paths and languages. Both place teenagers before core questions of self ("Who am I?"), acceptance ("How will I be accepted?"), and choices under pressure. However, "Bitch X Rich" attributes identity crisis to unequal social structures and class divides, manifesting in a violent, classist school environment where survival is paramount, while "Inside Out 2" situates the crisis within the adolescent mind, focusing on internal emotional and developmental shifts and psychological adaptation. "Bitch X Rich" emphasizes the \*lack\* of life skills like empathy and ethical problem-solving but fosters critical thinking about social inequalities, whereas "Inside Out 2" directly teaches emotional and psychological skills, normalizing anxieties and framing emotions as growth guides. While both highlight self-awareness and decision-making under pressure, "Bitch X Rich" depicts ethically dubious choices driven by power and survival, contrasting with "Inside Out 2"'s move towards more rational, emotion-informed decisions. Effective communication and conflict resolution are less explored in both, with relationships often depicted as fragile or instrumental. Pedagogically, "Bitch X Rich" offers a critical lens on social structures but risks normalizing unethical behavior, while "Inside Out 2" provides safer, supportive messages on emotional regulation and self-acceptance, albeit simplifying social realities. Both offer vicarious learning opportunities per Bandura's Social Learning Theory: "Inside Out 2" promotes constructive self-regulation, while "Bitch X Rich" encourages critical learning about the consequences of lacking life skills, necessitating guided analysis to derive positive growth rather than negative identification.

### Strategic management for media utilization in schools

1. Observation and assessment of social skills
2. Encouraging teachers to use multimedia
3. Empowering teachers and reducing resistance to change
4. Strengthening digital infrastructure for technology-based learning
5. Providing learning opportunities for media-assisted teaching
6. Promoting digital literacy and a culture of technology use in schools
7. Raising awareness among adolescents and educating on media literacy

## Discussion and conclusion

This research highlights the significant role of media, particularly dramatic media, in adolescent learning and life skills development. Drawing on Bandura's social cognitive theory, learning occurs through observation and imitation of media characters. Media representations of life skills facilitate attention, recall, reproduction, and motivation, aiding in the formation of individual and social competencies. Cultivation theory suggests that continuous media exposure shapes adolescents' perceptions of social reality. Frequent portrayals of life skills, especially emotional and social ones, in media can normalize these behaviors and contribute to their internalization. Media's educational role lies in influencing attitudes, values, and interpretive frameworks.

Educational managers and planners should strategically integrate media content with classroom activities and guided discussions to enhance media's impact and prevent misinterpretations.

School leaders and teachers are crucial: leaders by planning and adopting successful strategies, and teachers by using media and electronic content to ensure meaningful learning.

Integrating life skills and media literacy education, using animations and series, maximizes educational effectiveness and transfers cultural values and national identity. The education system should move towards purposeful use of media, multimedia content, and media literacy programs to make learning more engaging, effective, and aligned with the demands of the information age.

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### **Authors' Contribution**

The sole author was responsible for the study's conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, writing, and final approval of the manuscript.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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