

## **Presenting A Model For Distributing Books in Iran Based on Structural Equation Models**

### **Manijeh Torabi Alamooti**

Ph.D. Candidate in Knowledge and Information Science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

[torabi2093@yahoo.com](mailto:torabi2093@yahoo.com)

ORCID iD: [0000-0002-6565-7244](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6565-7244)

### **Fahimeh Babalhavaeji**

Associate Prof. Department of Knowledge and Information Science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

Corresponding Author: [f.babalhavaeji@gmail.com](mailto:f.babalhavaeji@gmail.com)

ORCID iD: [0000-0002-0247-6614](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0247-6614)

### **Dariush Matlabi**

Associate Prof., Humanities Faculty, Islamic Azad University of Shahre Rey (RAH), Tehran, Iran.

[dariushmatlabi@yahoo.com](mailto:dariushmatlabi@yahoo.com)

ORCID iD: [0000-0002-2503-6558](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2503-6558)

### **Nadjla Hariri**

Professor, Department of Knowledge and Information Science, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

[nadjlahariri@gmail.com](mailto:nadjlahariri@gmail.com)

ORCID iD: [0000-0002-2320-7023](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2320-7023)

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### **Abstract**

The present study was conducted to provide a suitable model for book distribution in Iran. This research is applied in terms of purpose, and the research method is mixed (qualitative: grounded theory; and quantitative: analytical survey). The data were collected through a series of semi-structured interviews at the qualitative stage. The population of the qualitative section consisted of 10 book distribution experts who were selected by using the snowball method; for the second population, 118 book distributors were purposefully selected, and the research questionnaire was distributed among them. The MAXQDA software was used to determine the qualitative section's concepts, categories, and subcategories. Then the paradigm of book distribution in Iran was identified. The model was determined using PLS software in the form of descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling in the quantitative section. In the qualitative section, the five cultural, economic, legal and political, substructural, and professional factors were identified; the results of the quantitative section showed that the cultural dimension had a weak relationship with distribution factors, and the relationship was vital for other dimensions. It can be said that the cultural dimension has the lowest intensity of the relationship, and the substructural dimension, economic dimension, professional dimension, and legal and political dimension have the highest intensity correlation with distribution factors, respectively. The most influential factors influencing book distribution were the lack of reading culture, inadequate distribution, unprofitability, weak rules, and unprincipled publishing support. The most effective way to improve the distribution was to strengthen the professional distributors. Distribution channels of goods and cultural services in Iran are mainly traditional. Moreover, the traditional distribution network, lack of use of new technologies, the long flow path of goods, the minimal share of bookstores in the distribution system, weakness of distribution substructures, lack of manpower skills in the distribution sector, and lack of capable public and private distribution networks cause inefficiency of the book distribution network and result in consumer dissatisfaction.

**Keywords:** Book Distribution, Book Distribution Model, Structural Equation, Distributers, Iran Book Distribution, Factors Affecting Book Distribution.

### Introduction

Book distribution is considered one of the most complicated stages in book publication, and its process is very diverse worldwide. According to the reports published about book distribution in various countries worldwide, finding a country completely satisfied with the distribution situation isn't easy. At least each country mentions some distribution problems. Still, the problem is often severe in developing countries, including Iran, where the book economy faces difficulties affected by the general economy (Azarang, 2012).

Most publishers, especially the small ones, are facing a distribution problem; many valuable books are left in storage due to a lack of information or improper distribution. Therefore, distributing and selling books is a process that must be stimulated based on proper planning and scientific methods (Babalhavaeji, 2008).

The book industry is similar to a long chain: creation, in the beginning, is followed by various stages of technical-production preparation, printing, publishing, distribution, advertising, supply, and sale that end up in preparing the conditions for the beginning of another chain. Book distribution is one of the most crisis-stricken links in the chain. A set of technical and economic factors, which is born of a crisis in policies, planning, and management of books, has made this link a big problem for books in Iran such that the communication bridge, which should be made by distribution procedure, is considered useless by publishers and readers as producers and consumers of books, respectively (Azarang, 2001).

Currently, the main problem for publishers apart from cultural issues and the reading habit is the issue of book distribution that causes grave concerns for them due to the unhealthy market system, the lack of regular and large distribution organizations, and spending time and capital; the high costs of distribution reduce the publishers' share of profits (Hasani, 1999). On the other hand, due to the limited market of books in the country, distributors cannot have a proper distribution, and this causes criticism and dissatisfaction of publishers. Studies show that the distribution problem does not only exist in Iran; in other countries, a couple of researches are carried out to fix this problem. In Pakistan, the factors that have reduced costs and increased the efficiency of the distribution network include advertising, shortening distribution channels, and strengthening distribution (Amanand and Hopkinson, 2010). In Thailand and Japan, meeting the need for specialized skills and manpower as well as paying attention to proper distribution substructure and transportation system are considered as the solutions to solve the problem of distribution (Grant and Banomyong, 2010). In the Arab market, lack of a proper book distribution system is one of the most important problems (Eschweiler & Goehler, 2010).

In the traditional world, the producer was producing proportionally to the needs of the market, and the consumer was meeting his/her needs by meeting the market. Now, the distance between production and consumption is a big challenge so that the probability of the product not reaching the consumer increases, and this is due to the variety of products, which in turn increases the power of today's consumers and makes decision-making more difficult, and, thus, reduces the chances of success of the manufacturer.

Mentioning these preliminaries is not a sign of the intolerance of the development of the global book distribution; instead, paying attention to the fact that studying and examining book distribution, recognizing barriers and its role in book economy and the relationship between

distribution and the spread of book-reading culture, and examining the financial relations of production and distribution factors should be the headline of research issues in the publishing industry. It is essential to pay attention to this subject because book distribution is one of the main parts of the book trade cycle, and proper distribution leads to better and lower cost access. The present study was conducted with the aim of providing a suitable model for book distribution in Iran.

Identifying the challenges in book distribution can be helpful to optimize the publishing process from production to consumption. In this regard, it can be said that, in general, the book distribution process is so important that disorder in book distribution affects book production. Book creators cannot achieve their goals of producing books when non-governmental and independent sellers and publishers do not have the necessary efficiency due to external pressures. As a result, they will not have the motivation and desire to produce and with that, the book production process is also affected by the inefficiency in the system. The nature of each commodity in the production process affects the consumers' expectations of the product and its distribution, and optimizing the process of each commodity requires the study of scientific methods about that commodity. Regarding books, advertising, information, and distribution are very important factors such that neglecting them severely affects the whole process from production to consumption (Babalhavaeji, 2008).

Improper distribution of books prevents the readers from access to the resources they need. With limited and difficult access, the readers will inevitably move away from reading, and eventually we will face the bigger problem of reluctance to read and low reading per capita.

This study shows the efficiency, results, actions and past activities in this field and represents the challenges thereof. The results of this study can help the book cycle, especially distributors, to make ore informed decisions. By clarifying problems and providing appropriate solutions, it helps publishers, distribution centers and bookstores to provide better services. Finally, with better distribution, the audience will be able to access the books faster and easier.

### **Literature Review**

A review of the research shows that one of the main deficient elements of publishing that has caused problems for the publishing industry is the book distribution loop. One of the first researches conducted independently in the field of distribution was Hayati's (1979) research, which showed publishers and booksellers were the most important factors in book distribution. Incomplete distribution statistics and return on capital in publishing activities were slow. Kiaian (1992) expresses the book crisis in two factors: the high price of books and the low rate or absence of reading habits in people indicating that lack of stratum of readers makes the book an inflexible commodity and causes a kind of economic insecurity for the publisher-bookseller. Ayati (1994) addresses the low per capita reading in the unhealthy distribution situation and points to another problem: bookstores' unawareness of new books published in Tehran. Heidari (2011) did a study on the problems of the members of the Tehran Book Distributors Cooperative and introduced the lack of sufficient capital like equipment and skilled manpower and warehouse as well as the lack of support from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance as the key problems of Iran's book distribution. Mousavi, Ramezani Nejad and Ebrahimpour (2013), studying the low status of book reprints, found that factors like low audience reception, unattractive books, book content not being updated or incompatibility with customer needs were effective factors. Akhoundi and Javid Moayed (2015) concluded that we basically do not

know about book marketing in Iran, and for the evolution of the publishing industry and publishing economy, Iranian publishers must change their view on book marketing and do brilliant actions to achieve book marketing. Paknahad (2015), in a study from the perspective of members of the Association of Publishers of Children and Adolescent Books, mentioned cultural substructure, financial and economic issues, organizational and trade union issues, communication and information issues, and general government policies and government institutions as some of the problems of distributing children's and adolescents' books in Iran, respectively. Khademian (2017), analyzing the characteristics of book distribution in Iran in a research, found book distribution immaturity, lack of union identity, lack of a defined and professional model, low efficiency of the distribution profession, and the small size of the distribution class as the results. Yarahmadi (2018), in his thesis, analyzes the problems of the distribution system of books produced in the field of arts and determines people's disinterest in books, warehousing problems, low reading rate of literate people, lack of a comprehensive plan and a comprehensive publishing program, economic problems, inefficient distribution and sales methods, and the slow return of capital as the most important problems, respectively. Lorentz, Wong, and Hilmola (2007) conducted a study entitled "Emerging distribution systems in central and Eastern Europe: Implications from two case studies". According to the research findings, due to the traditional structure of the distribution network of Eastern and Central European countries, the direct distribution system of goods is mainly used in these countries. Research results also show that factors such as the use of new technologies, the creation of large distribution chains (like retail and specialty stores), and advertising appropriate to each market segment are variables to improve the efficiency of distribution networks in these areas. Eschweiler and Goehler (2010), in conclusion of a research, mention that besides unsolved censorship issues, problems with money collection, and differing regulations, and the lack of a uniform book distribution system are the most critical hurdles for the development of a common Arabic book market. Grant and Banomyong (2010) conducted a study on the design of the consumer goods distribution chain in Thailand and Japan. They concluded in their study that the skills and expertise of human resources, the existence of appropriate substructure for the distribution and transportation of goods, and utilization of new technologies including e-commerce have a high impact on improving efficiency and reducing the cost of distributing consumer goods in these countries. Amanand and Hopkinson (2010) conducted a study entitled "The changing structure of distribution channels in Pakistan". They examined the dimensions and different parts of the direct and indirect distribution of goods in Pakistan. Fayyaz and Azizinia (2016), in an article entitled "Current Challenges in Distribution Channels of Cultural Goods and Services", state that marketing managers always try to find the more efficient and modern methods of distribution through investigating the transfer methods of goods. One of the main tools of marketing is the efficient distribution system. Since cultural products have a determining role in conveyance of thoughts, values, and social norms and transmit cultural values and messages with themselves, their distribution has a great importance.

Luck, Lamp, Craig and Neilson (2015) and Poirel and Pache (2017) focused on the benefits that may eventuate through new mechanisms of production and distribution so that as we enter the twenty-first century, the nature of the book and the structure of the industry which produces it are undergoing radical transformation, as developments in information technology offer new mechanisms for production and distribution.

Funge, Sullivan and Tarter (2017), in an article entitled "Promoting Positive Family

Interactions: Evaluating a Free Early Childhood Book Distribution Program", encourage reading among families of preschool children by mailing age-appropriate books once per month until the child reaches the age of five. The program introduced more diverse reading choices, fostered children's love of reading, promoted cognitive development and readiness for school, increased use of public libraries, and encouraged family interaction. Some differences in reading activities based on family communication styles were found. Koltsova, Alpatov and Volkova (2020), in an article entitled "Culture in the global economy: features of cultural goods on the threshold of a knowledge economy and increasing the country's competitiveness", substantiate the need for state participation in promoting cultural goods. It seems that the criterion for the validity of state support or commercial provision of the socio-cultural sphere should be the security of each citizen and society as a whole. State support is necessary primarily for the implementation of social marketing and ensuring free access of the population to the best domestic and world examples of culture and art.

In addition to studies that are done specifically in the field of distribution, there are other studies that have addressed publishing and bookstores. These have paid attention to the issue of distribution and considered it as one of the most important components affecting the publishing industry and inefficiency of the distribution system (Rahmani, 2006; Aghajani, 2008; Fahimnia and Mantegh, 2013; Khalatbari, 2014; Karami and Ojaghi, 2016; Rasooli, 2018). Previous studies show that with the formation of new technologies, the interest in and use of traditional books still remain. The issue of book distribution in Iran lacks any clear planning and strategy and is more focused on traditional methods. The industry traditionally depends on book distribution revenues, and book distribution in its professional form is the most important issue in the publishing industry.

Nowadays, if a product, that has a proper design, cannot be provided to buyers at the right time and place, it will not be desirable. Therefore, formal marketing and sales managers are always trying to find more efficient and modern distribution methods by evaluating the methods of transferring goods. Proper decision-making leads to increased transfer speed, customer convenience and costs reduction. The efficient distribution system is one of the main marketing tools. Because cultural products play a decisive role in the transmission of ideas, values and social norms and carry cultural values and messages, the distribution of them is very important. The review of the literature shows that little research has been done on the distribution of books. The important point here to consider is that the model of book distribution in Iran has not been studied and presented so far. The present study will probably be able to identify the challenges of book distribution and provide solutions and ultimately a model in this field. One of the advantages of using the distribution model is identifying crises and providing solutions to remove obstacles. Among the potential benefits of the book distribution model are increased achievement of goals, improved identification of opportunities and threats, establishing a sound basis for decision-making, allocating resources and using them for management, minimizing losses, and encouraging government to provide comprehensive support.

### **Materials and Methods**

The present study is applied and is non-experimental in terms of controlling variables, and the method of research implementation is mixed, which includes two parts, qualitative and quantitative. In the first stage, the research method was grounded theory, and in the second stage, the research was conducted by using analytic-survey method. The data were collected

through a series of semi-structured interviews. In the qualitative section, the research population consisted of 10 book distribution experts in Iran. Identifying two distribution experts purposefully, the next individuals were introduced by them through the snowball method. In the qualitative stage, MAXQDA software was used to determine the concepts, categories and subcategories. Finally, the contexts, causal conditions, main strategies, interveners and consequences of book distribution in Iran were identified. The population of quantitative research section included all distributors nationwide. The research tool was set up as a 65-item questionnaire based on the findings of the qualitative section. The main data collection tool was a questionnaire: 2 questions for cultural dimension, 11 questions for economic dimension, 10 legal and political questions, 12 questions for substructural dimension, and 13 questions for professional dimension were considered based on the studied variables, respectively. There are several ways to determine the validity of a measuring tool, one of which is to ask experts (Sarmad, Bazargan & Hejazi, 2004). To determine the validity of the research measuring tool, comments and suggestions of professors and veterans in the field of distribution (content validity) were used, and the necessary corrections were made according to their suggestions and opinions. There are many different methods to determine the reliability of measuring tools, one of which is internal consistency (Conca, Liopis & Tari, 2004). Cronbach's alpha coefficient can measure the internal consistency of the measuring tool. The minimum acceptable value should be 0.7 (Aghajani & Ganjehkhor, 2010).

In the present study, the reliability of questions related to cultural, economic, legal and political, substructural and professional dimensions and the questions related to solutions were 875%, 973%, 924%, 962%, 970%, 979%, respectively, that are considered acceptable coefficients. Several methods have been proposed to determine the sample size in studies based on structural modeling. Cass and Tinzley (1979) suggest a sample of 300 people (Karshki, 2012). The sample size of 200 people is appropriate (Kline, 2001). Kline (2001) considers a sample of 100 people sufficient. Accordingly, using a purposeful census method, a sample size of 118 people, which is a good sample for modeling researches, was selected, and a research questionnaire was distributed among them. In general, in modeling structural equations, it is necessary to test two models: 1) the measuring model (confirmatory factor analysis), and 2) the structural model (confirmatory path analysis). The relationships between latent and observed variables are analyzed in the measuring model, and the relationships between latent variables are analyzed in the structural model. Consequently, according to the conceptual model of research, cultural, economic, legal and political, substructural and professional dimensions are latent variables, which are measured through questions related to the factors that are observed variables.

## Results

### Research Findings

The findings of the qualitative section were obtained in the form of tables so that codes were determined for each interview. The method of coding the files is as follows: "D" for distribution experts, "P" for publishers, "B" for booksellers, and "Pr" for professors, which are combined when there is a combination of several professions and specialties. The numbers only indicate the order of the interviewees according to their specialization. Finally, the combination of letters and numbers has created the desired code. Then, the key sentences of each interview and the concepts related to them were identified. Concepts were converted to categories, and

then the feature or theme of each category was identified. The following is a summary of one of the interviews conducted and a summary paradigm for it.

*Table 1*

*An example of coding and extracting concepts, categories, and features from an interview*

Sentences/D1P2	Concept	Category	Feature
The book is a low-traction product	Book a low-traction product	Low demand	Cultural
Distribution is a minor problem. In fact, the inappropriate structure of book production and the limited demand for books in our society, are combined in our country.	Limited demand for books		
Due to the small profit margin of the distributor organization, it does not last as long as it does not belong to the manufacturer.	Distribution profession not being economical	Lack of profitability	Economic
Distribution costs are by no means affordable for the sustainability of a development organization.	Book business not being profitable	Distribution profession not being economical	
Distribution is a minor problem. In fact, the inappropriate structure of book production and the limited demand for books in our society, are combined in our country.	Low quality of books	Publishing being unprofessional	Professional
How did you assess the need before you presented this book, why should someone else advertise your book?		Needs assessment by the publisher before production	
The production and consumption of books should be considered the main problem due to the purposeless support of the government in the production sector (publishing licenses have not been successful).	The number of publishers increasing dramatically	Government supports	Political (government)
Inappropriate production structure and limited book demand in Iran have created a problem due to purposeless supports.	Government purposeless support for publishing	Unprincipled support for publishing	
There are other people, formed the mafia, who do not want books from the majority of publishers with publishing licenses, to be distributed in the book market.	Existence of distribution mafias	Lack of supervision over book distribution	
We have guilds for both booksellers and publishers, so a distributor whose livelihood depends on book distribution will not be permanent.	Direct sales of books by the publisher	Guild Interference	Substructural

The interview was conducted with one of the distributors who was active in the field of publishing as well as distribution. Table 1 shows the situation of book distribution in Iran that can be studied from cultural, economic, professional, political and substructural aspects.

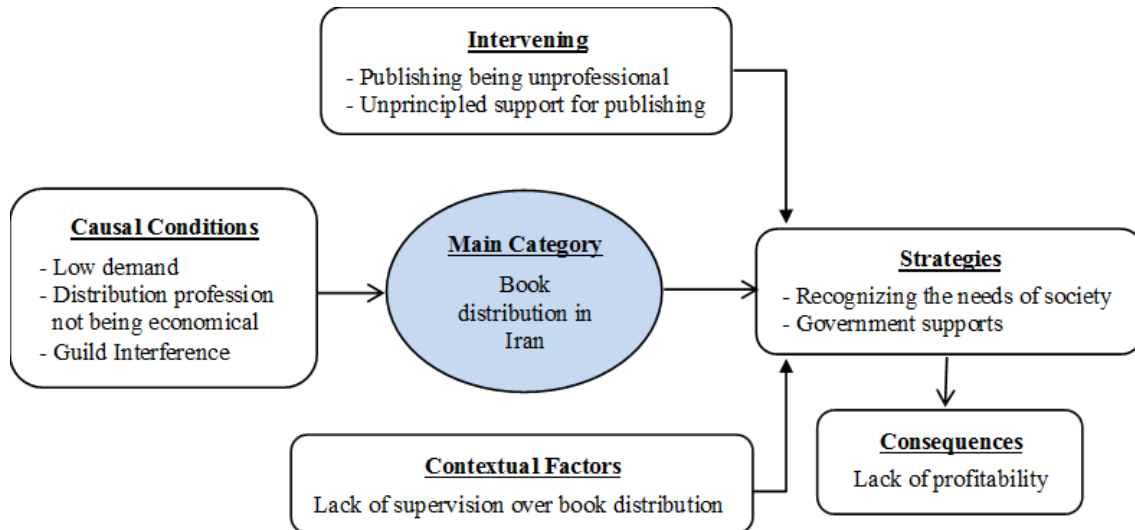


Figure 1: Interview Paradigm

The result of the above paradigm is as follows:

Causal conditions include low demand, distribution profession not being economical, and guild interference. Intervention conditions include publishing being unprofessional and unprincipled support for publishing. Underlying causes include lack of supervision over book distribution. Strategies include recognizing the needs of society and government supports. Consequences include lack of profitability.

**Findings of the quantitative section**

The results of the demographic status of the sample members showed that out of 118 respondents (100% response rate), 94.1% are male, and 5.9% are female. The percentage of respondents' degree qualifications are as follows: 5.79% had less than a high school diploma, 35.6% had diploma, 40.7% had bachelor's degree, 11.9% had master's degree, and 5.9% had doctorate degree. In addition, of the respondents, 1.7% had under 5 years, 5.9% had between 6 and 10 years, 18.6% had between 11 and 15 years , 23.7% had between 16 to 20 years , 50% had more than 21 years of work experience.

Based on the findings of the qualitative section, the five cultural, economic, legal and political, substructural, and professional dimensions were identified. The results of descriptive statistics are presented in the table below.

Table 2  
Mean and standard deviation of model variables

Factor	Sample size	Mean	Standard deviation	Min.	Max.
Cultural	118	2.6483	1.50542	1	5
Economic	118	3.275	1.47865	1	5
Legal & Political	118	3.272	1.76691	1	5
Substructural	118	3.2323	1.31405	1	5
Professional	118	3.3064	1.37159	1	5
Solution	118	3.3664	1.38773	1	5

According to the above table, the average response score of individuals is 2.648 for the cultural criterion, 3.275 for the economic value criterion , 3.272 for the legal and political



criterion , 3.2323 for the substructural criterion , 3.306 for the professional criterion ,and 3.366 for the solution criterion .

### Investigation of research hypotheses

To test the research hypotheses, Spearman nonparametric correlation test is used considering that the distribution of variables is not normal, and the purpose is to investigate the relationship between the two variables.

In this test, the hypotheses are defined as follows:

**H<sub>0</sub>**: There is no significant relationship between the two variables.

**H<sub>1</sub>**: There is a significant relationship between the two variables.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship of the cultural, economic, and substructural issues with the characteristics of the book distribution profession in Iran.

Table 3

*Correlation test between the variables in the first hypothesis of the research*

First variable - Second variable	Test statistic (Spearman correlation coefficient)	Significance level
Cultural issues - Professional characteristic	0.311	0.001
Economic issues - Professional characteristic	0.492	< 0.001
Substructural issues - Professional characteristic	0.435	< 0.001

According to Table 3, the level of significance for each of the considered relationships is less than the error level of 5%. As a result, according to the available data, the lack of correlation between each of the defined relationships cannot be ruled out, and it must be admitted that there is a statistically significant relationship between these variables.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between the creation of a solution and the promotion of book distribution in Iran.

Table 4

*Correlation test for second hypothesis of the research*

First variable - Second variable	Test statistic (Spearman correlation coefficient)	Significance level
Solution creation - Promoting book distribution in Iran	0.549	< 0.001

According to Table 4, Spearman correlation coefficient for the relationship between creating a solution and promoting book distribution in Iran is equal to 0.549, and the significance level for this test (p-value <0.001) is less than the error level of 5%. Therefore, according to the available data, the null hypothesis (i.e. no relationship between creating a solution and promoting book distribution in Iran) cannot be rejected, and we accept that there is a statistically significant relationship between creating a solution and promoting book distribution in Iran at the 5% error level.

In response to the main research question: "What is the appropriate model for book

distribution in Iran?", the following results were obtained.

### Investigating the normality of research variables

In order to implement statistical methods, calculate the criteria, and make logical inferences about research questions, the most important action, before anything else, is to choose the appropriate statistical method for research. For this purpose, awareness of data distribution is a top priority. In this study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used to check the normality of the research data. In this test, according to the following hypotheses, a step was taken to check the normality of data:

**H<sub>0</sub>:** The distribution of data is normal.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** The distribution of data is not normal.

Considering Kolmogorov-Smirnov test table, if the significance level for all independent and dependent variables is greater than the error level of 5%, the H<sub>0</sub> hypothesis is confirmed, and as a result, the data distribution is normal.

Table 5  
Normality test of the analyzed variables

Variable	Sample size	Test statistic	Significance level	Test error	Hypothesis H <sub>0</sub>	Result
Cultural	118	0.201	< 0.001	0.05	Rejected	Not normal
Economic	118	0.243	< 0.001	0.05	Rejected	Not normal
Legal & Political	118	0.228	< 0.001	0.05	Rejected	Not normal
Substructural	118	0.21	< 0.001	0.05	Rejected	Not normal
Professional	118	0.238	< 0.001	0.05	Rejected	Not normal
Solution	118	0.248	< 0.001	0.05	Rejected	Not normal

According to the values of the above table in which the significance level of the test for all variables is less than 0.05, it can be said that the H<sub>0</sub> hypothesis of the variables is rejected, and the H<sub>1</sub> hypothesis is confirmed; therefore, the distribution of variables does not follow the normal distribution.

### Model fit

Model fit means the extent to which a model is compatible with the relevant data. In this section, the fit of the assumed research model is evaluated to ensure its consistency with the research data, and finally the research answer is inferred. The fit of the research model was investigated in two stages. The first is to evaluate the fit of the measuring part of the model, and the second is to evaluate the fit of the structural part of the model, which is discussed below in detail. Since the measuring model is reflective, we first evaluate the factor structure and components, which is the hierarchical pattern of the book distribution scale as shown in Figure 2.

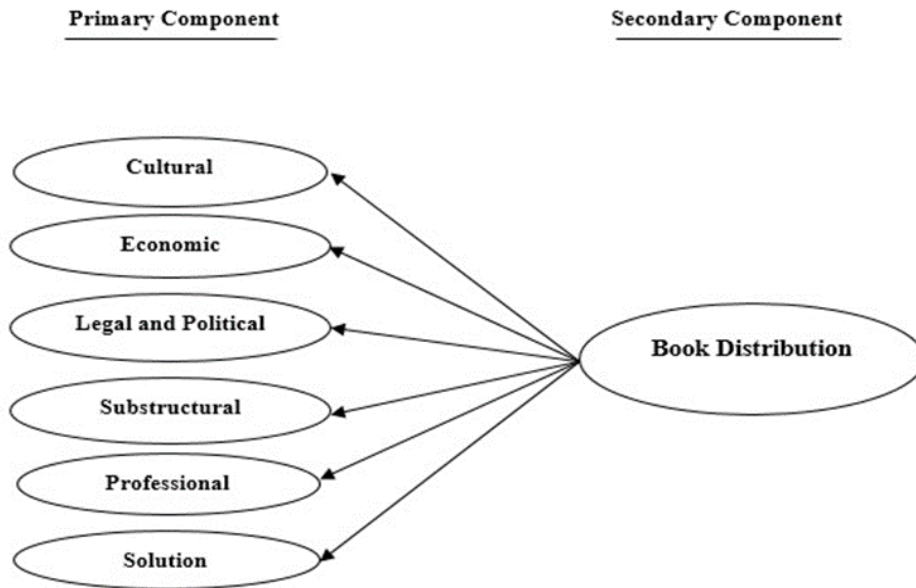


Figure 2: Conceptual model of second-order factor analysis

In PLS path analysis, the observed variables are frequently used to conceptualize a hierarchical model (Guinot, Latreille & Tenenhaus, 2001; Tenenhaus et al., 2005). Thus, a higher-order latent variable can be constructed by using all the lower-order observed variables (questions). The fit of the measuring model of the book distribution variable in SmartPLS software is shown in Figure 3.

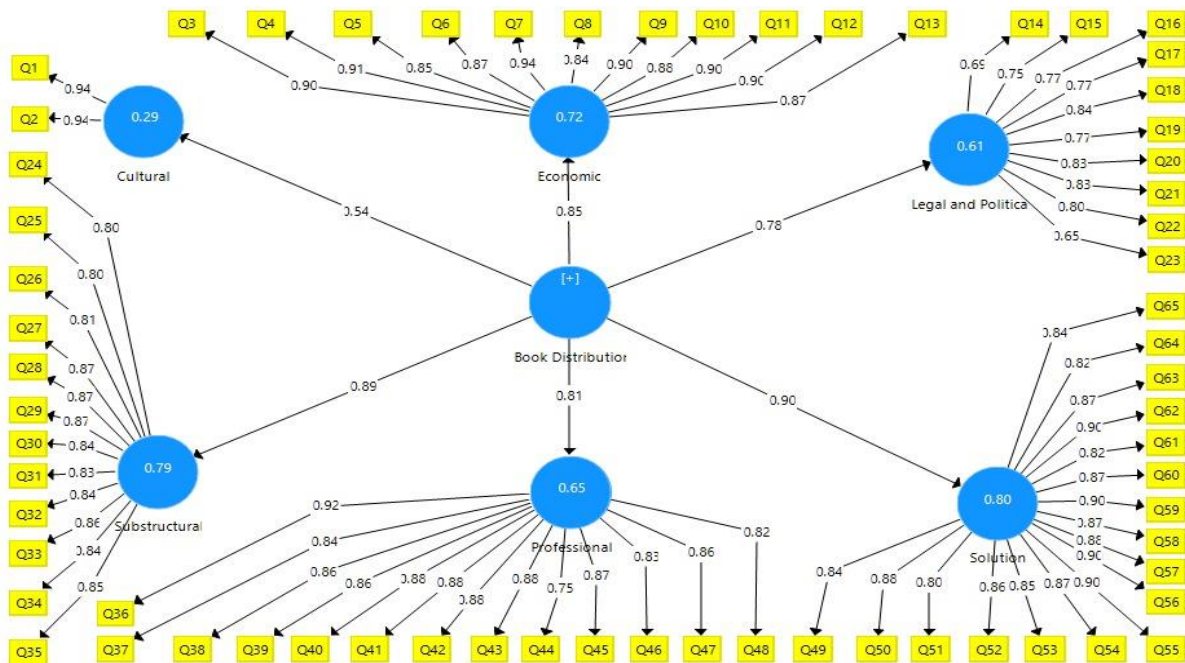


Figure 3: Measurement model of book distribution variable in factor load mode (standardized coefficients)

Now, we will analyze and evaluate the fit of the measuring model.

### Evaluation of the measuring model (external model) of research

Table 6

Factor load of research questions

Variable	Question no.	Factor load	Variable	Question no.	Factor load
Cultural	1	0.943	Professional	36	0.918
	2	0.942		37	0.838
Economic	3	0.898		38	0.863
	4	0.914		39	0.862
	5	0.852		40	0.875
	6	0.868		41	0.883
	7	0.941		42	0.88
	8	0.842		43	0.878
	9	0.9		44	0.752
	10	0.881		45	0.873
	11	0.897		46	0.832
	12	0.899		47	0.862
	13	0.869		48	0.825
Legal & Political	14	0.688	Solution	49	0.84
	15	0.75		50	0.885
	16	0.767		51	0.804
	17	0.77		52	0.862
	18	0.84		53	0.849
	19	0.774		54	0.869
	20	0.828		55	0.903
	21	0.834		56	0.902
	22	0.801		57	0.876
	23	0.653		58	0.869
Substructural	24	0.799		59	0.904
	25	0.801		60	0.87
	26	0.811		61	0.821
	27	0.868		62	0.905
	28	0.869		63	0.872
	29	0.873	64	0.819	
	30	0.839	65	0.842	
	31	0.83			
	32	0.839			
	33	0.864			
	34	0.836			
	35	0.85			

The standardized factor load values of each criterion (item or question) are reported in Table 6.

Table 7

Results of three criteria: Cronbach's alpha, reliability and convergent validity

Variables	Cronbach's alpha coefficients (Alpha > 0.7)	Combined reliability coefficient (Cr > 0.7)	Mean variance (AVE > 0.5)
Cultural	0.875	0.941	0.889
Economic	0.973	0.976	0.788
Legal & Political	0.924	0.936	0.597
Substructural	0.962	0.966	0.706
Professional	0.97	0.973	0.736
Solution	0.979	0.981	0.748
Total (Book distribution)	0.985	0.986	0.515

Given that Cronbach's alpha numbers, hybrid reliability (internal consistency) and AVE are all in the corresponding range, it can be confirmed that the convergent reliability and validity of the research model are appropriate.

Table 8

Criteria for the Goodness of fit of the research model

Variables	Acceptable range	Observed value	Result
SRMR	Less than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)	0.047	Proper fit
NFI	More than 0.25 (Bonett & Bentler, 1999)	0.869	Proper fit

The above table shows the fit of the research model. According to the obtained values, the collected data is sufficient and fit enough to measure the latent variables, and, thus, the results of the research model are reliable.

Also, the value of the statistic Q<sup>2</sup> (Stone-Geisser) determines the predictive power of the model in endogenous structures. Models that have an acceptable structural fit should be able to predict the endogenous variables of the model. This means that if the relationships between structures are properly defined in a model, the structures will have a sufficient impact on each other, and, thus, the hypotheses will be correctly confirmed. Henseler, Ringle & Sinlovics (2009) set three values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 as low, medium and strong predictive power values, respectively.

This value equals 0.198 for cultural, 0.396 for economic, 0.255 for legal and political, 0.39 for substructural, 0.335 for professional, and 0.418 for solution variables; these values, that are mediocre and strong, indicate the predictive proportion for these structures.

Table 9

Stones-Geisser Statistic Values of Research Variables

Variables	Stone-Geisser criterion	Status
Cultural	0.198	Moderate
Economic	0.396	Strong
Legal & Political	0.255	Strong
Substructural	0.39	Strong

Variables	Stone-Geisser criterion	Status
Professional	0.335	Strong
Solution	0.418	Strong

Divergent validity is another criterion for measuring the model fit, which indicates the amount of difference between the questions of one factor and other factors. This research followed the Fornell and Larcker method. Fornell and Larcker (1981) stated that divergent validity is acceptable when the amount of AVE squared for each structure is greater than the common variance between that structure and other structures (i.e. squared value of correlation coefficients between structures) in the model. Table 10 reports the results of divergent validity. The squares of AVE values are on the main diameter, and the column for each structure is the values of common variance between that structure and other structures. As it turns out, the values on the main diameter of the matrix are more significant than all the values in the corresponding column, indicating that the fitted model has a proper diagnostic validity.

Table 10

*Divergent validity of research*

Factor	Economic	Legal & Political	Solution	Substructural	Cultural	Professional
Economic	0.888					
Legal & Political	0.652	0.773				
Solution	0.681	0.619	0.865			
Substructural	0.677	0.663	0.766	0.84		
Cultural	0.554	0.522	0.322	0.436	0.943	
Professional	0.594	0.527	0.628	0.655	0.444	0.858

### **Structural research model evaluation (internal model (a second-order component in research model))**

The adjusted R squared indicates the effect of the exogenous variable on the endogenous variable. This criterion has the ability to reduce errors in the measuring model and increase the variance between structures and indices, which is controlled only in PLS. Chin (1998) introduces the three values of 0.19, 0.33 and 0.67 as weak, medium and strong values for the intensity of the relationship, respectively. According to Figure 4, the adjusted R squared for each of the endogenous variables of cultural, economic, legal and political, substructural, professional, and solution is equal to 0.285, 0.718, 0.609, 0.788, 0.648, and 0.802, respectively. The intensity of the relationship for the cultural variable is weak, and for other variables, it is strong. In fact, it can be said that cultural component has the least impact, and solutions, substructural, economic, professional, and legal and political issues have the highest impact on distribution, respectively.

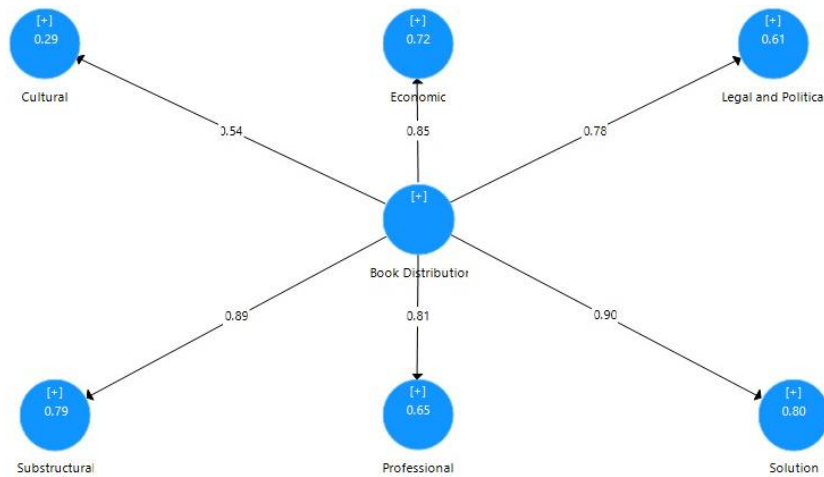


Figure 4: Standardized factor load of the second component of the research model and adjusted R squared

Because in PLS software, t-statistic is used to check factor load significance, and this value is 1.96 at a 5% error, the comparison between 1.96 and t-statistic is used to examine the significance level. Thus, if the t-statistic is more than that mentioned value, the factor load

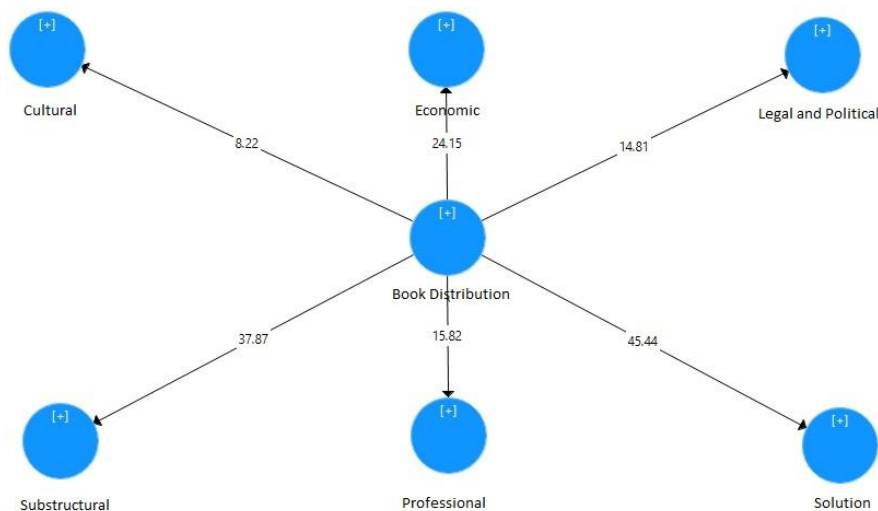


Figure 5: T-Statistic values for the factor loads of the second component in the research model (relationship) is significant. Considering Figure 5, t-statistic for all relations is greater than 1.96.

Table 11  
Summary of second-order component evaluation in the research model

Factor	Factor load	T-Statistic	R <sup>2</sup>
Cultural	0.54	8.22	0.285
Economic	0.849	24.15	0.718
Legal & Political	0.783	14.81	0.609
Substructural	0.888	37.87	0.788
Professional	0.807	15.82	0.648
Solution	0.896	45.44	0.802

### Evaluating the overall research model

The general model includes both parts of measured and structural model, and by confirming its fit, the fit check in a model is completed. The goodness of fit (GOF) is related to the general part of the structural equations model. This means that, by this criterion, the researcher can control the general part of the fit after examining the fit of the measuring part and the structural part of the general research model.

Communality (common values) in the GOF formula is obtained from the mean squared of the factor loads of each variable. GOF is obtained by calculating the geometric mean, average mean, and mean of adjusted R squared, which has a value between 0 and 1, and the closer it is to one, the more suitable the model fits. In addition, some researchers have stated that the model with a good fit has a value higher than 0.36, and the model with a medium fit has a value between 0.19 and 0.36.

Table 12 shows the Communality and  $R^2$  values of the software output.

Table 12  
*R<sup>2</sup> and Communality values*

Variables	$R^2$	Communality
Cultural	0.285	0.198
Economic	0.718	0.396
Legal & Political	0.609	0.255
Substructural	0.788	0.390
Professional	0.648	0.335
Solution	0.802	0.418

The value of  $GOF = 0.462$  was obtained using the formula and table values. Due to this very suitable fit, the research model was approved. Finally, the conceptual model in Figure 6, the validity of which was proved by confirmatory factor analysis to be highly desirable, can be presented as a suitable model for book distribution in Iran.

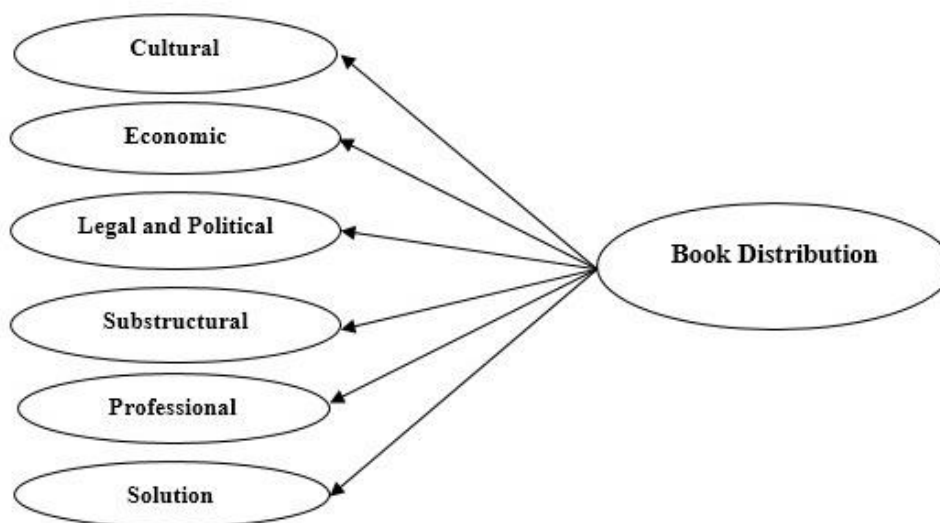


Figure 6: Conceptual schema



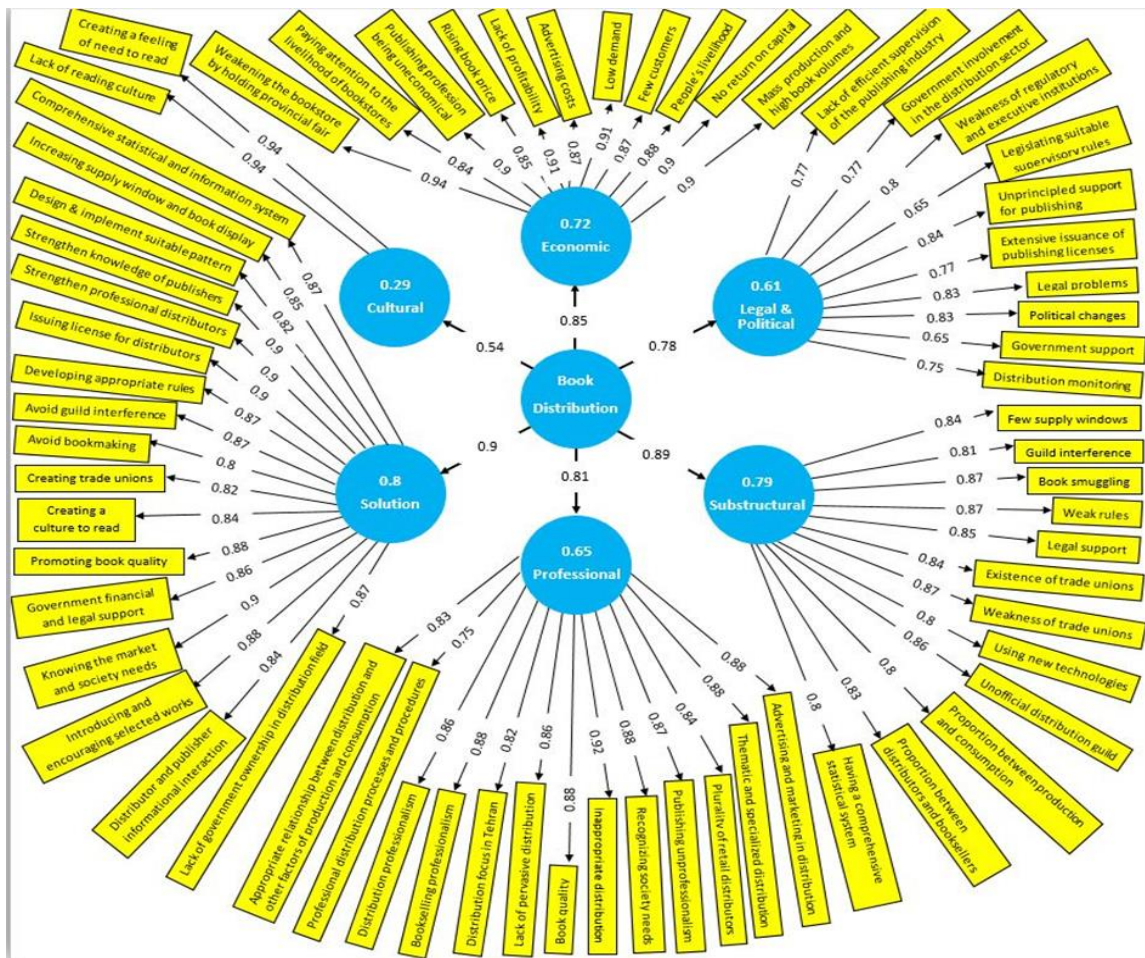


Figure 7: The final model of the research

In this study, a model for book distribution in Iran is presented, which includes five dimensions: economic, legal and political, substructural, cultural, and professional, each of which indicates the following:

Cultural dimension includes lack of reading culture and creating a sense of need to read; economic dimension includes lack of return on investment, lack of profitability, increase in book prices, advertising costs, weakening bookstores by holding provincial exhibitions, attention to the economy of bookstores, uneconomical publishing profession, economic situation of the people, mass production and high numbers, low demand and scarcity of customers; legal and political dimension includes setting appropriate regulatory laws, distribution supervision, lack of effective supervision of the publishing industry, government interference in the distribution sector, unprincipled support for publishing, widespread issuance of publishing licenses, legal problems, political changes, weakness of regulatory and executive institutions, and government support; substructural dimension includes guild interference, use of new technologies, weakness of trade unions, weakness of laws, having a comprehensive information system, book smuggling, lack of supply showcase, proportion of distributors and booksellers, existence of trade unions, unofficial distribution guild, proportion of production and consumption and legal protections; professional dimension includes improper distribution,

multiple retail distributors, professional distribution agents, unprofessional publishing, professional bookstores, book quality, advertising and marketing in distribution, lack of universal distribution, thematic distribution and specialized, appropriate relationship between distributors and other factors of production and consumption, understanding the needs of society, the focus of distribution in Tehran and the processes and procedures of professional distribution.

Finally, solutions were proposed to improve the distribution situation in Iran, which include creating a reading culture, introducing and encouraging selected works, preventing bookmaking, government financial and legal support, increasing the supply and display of books, non-governmental ownership in distribution, strengthening the professional knowledge of publishers, understanding the market and the needs of society, improving the quality of books, formulating appropriate rules and regulations, issuing licenses to distributors, preventing guild interference, designing and implementing an appropriate model, strengthening professional distributors, the establishment of a comprehensive statistical and information system, establishment of trade unions, and information interaction between distributors and publishers.

According to the factor analysis results, the intensity of the relationship between latent variables (cultural, economic, legal and political, professional and substructural dimensions) and observed variables (measured using 65 questions) was measured. The results showed that the intensity of the relationship for the cultural dimension is weak but strong for other dimensions. The cultural dimension has the lowest intensity of relationship and solidarity, while solutions, substructural, economic, professional, legal, and political dimensions have the highest relationship intensity with distribution factors, respectively.

Results of the paradigm of the qualitative section: One of the reasons for the weakness of the distribution sector is the nascence of the profession that needs support; the general policies of the government and government institutions, especially the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in removing obstacles, can help remove the issues and problems of distribution. Government support, oversight, and justice boost not only the distribution sector but also the book industry in all sectors (production, distribution, sales); but this support should oversee the creation of book-related substructure.

Quantitative research results show that one of the problems and factors affecting the distribution is the lack of proper advertising, which is not done by any of the guilds due to high advertising costs and low profit of the book profession. On the other hand, the lack of professionalism of booksellers and distributors in introducing the books properly to convince more buyers fuels this problem (Paknahad, 2015).

Another problem with the book distribution is the lack of government oversight and support and the poor performance of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, which contributes to numerous problems, including the government's non-targeted support for the production sector and the lack of support for the distribution and sales sector. Hayati (1979), Paknahad (2015) mentioned the impact of general policies of the government and its dependent institutions on the publishing and distributing of books.

Due to the unsettled distribution situation and low per capita reading, the role of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in establishing large bookstores is one of the ways to bring books into people's lives, which is in line with the results of Ayati's (1994) research.

The process of advertising in distribution should be done well to justify the customer, and

some products, like shampoo, may not have a license to advertise. Still, they have worked well in advertising, marketing, and distribution systems. Javid Moayed and Akhoundi (2012) mention a lack of awareness and correct knowledge of book marketing in Iran. They suggest that to achieve book marketing; the publisher must change their attitude towards marketing and invest in the right direction in this regard.

It is extracted from the results that the need to use new technologies in distribution is vital. Aghajani (2008), comparing the application of new tools and methods of distribution in Iran and the world, shows that there is insufficient knowledge of many new tools and methods in Iran; retail in Iran does not have much interest or desire to use these tools and methods or does not have the necessary knowledge in this field.

In the area of economic problems, low demand, high costs and shipment cost, Canoy, Van Ours and Van Der Plog (2006) mention financial aid and tax cuts by the government in their results.

The traditional nature of the distribution network is one factor that has caused this network's inefficiency. Lorentz et al. (2007) point to the traditional structure of the distribution network.

Another problem of distribution and low reading rate in Iran is the high cost of books and the weakness of codified cultural laws. Kiaian (1992) showed that the high cost of books and low reading cause economic insecurity for the book profession and results in the lack of codified cultural criteria.

One of the problems that indirectly affects the distribution business is the low income of bookstores and the low sales. Rasooli (2018) states in his results that, economically, most bookstores are not satisfied with their income and profits. While 40 percent of them turn to other services besides book sales, such as multimedia sales, brain teasers, maps, magazines and stationery, there is no innovation in bookstore services.

The high quality of the book in terms of content and being up-to-date is the ultimate goal of the customer to make a purchase. Mousavi et al. (2013) consider the unattractiveness of the books, the lack of up-to-date books, and the lack of fit with the needs of customers as the reasons for the low reception of the audience. Rahmani (2006) declares that the attention of experts to the needs of different age groups in production increases the tendency of people to read. Karami and Ojaghi (2016) express that the lack of attractiveness of the content and appearance of the book is the most important factor that does not create the necessary motivation for the reader. The results from Fahimnia and Mantegh (2013) also proved that the amount of quality is proportional to the amount of audience attraction.

Lack of skills and expertise of human resources in the distribution sector and lack of application of new technologies are other factors affecting the distribution network. Heidari (2011) introduced the lack of sufficient capital such as equipment, skilled manpower, and warehouse and the lack of support from the Ministry of Islamic Guidance as the most common problems of book distribution. Grant and Banomyong (2010) reported the impact of these factors on cost reduction of distributes in Thailand and Japan.

### Discussion

A cultural product, like a book, does not have a specific useful lifespan, and without a doubt, some books wear out over time, and if they are not sold on time, the proper consumption date will expire. A balance must be struck between production, demand, and sales. Knowing the market conditions allows the maximum possible quantity of goods to be sold at the best

price and in the shortest possible time.

The policy of increasing publishers has caused non-professional publishers to emerge and the number of publishers to increase daily. The high number of issued publishing licenses has caused people with no background in publishing to turn to it. At the same time, they either do not publish a book or publish low-quality and parallel books with inappropriate translations, which also harms the distribution and sale. Thus, it can be said that the publishing licenses have not been very successful and damage to the body is the result. It is suggested that licensing should be granted to publishers under the new rules set by the legislature.

Government assistance and support in the distribution sector should have a supervisory instead of an intervening role and should only notice the policies and leave implementation to the private sector. The government can provide a platform for several non-professional publishers who have entered this profession by giving them the privilege to quit and allocate costs to support distributors same as what applies to publishers.

Distribution guild is not economical because of the labor system, long-term checks with low-profit margins, and low-income margins. Government assistance can provide support for the profession by creating leverage and guaranteeing funds, ending the fear of losing capital or dishonoring checks, and so on.

The publisher must produce the book according to the community and audience needs; presently, the taste, type of behavior, speech, and views of the community have changed, and the content must be produced according to these changes. These needs must be met so that the society is accompanied by helpful content along with the dignity and consciousness of the people for the progress and awareness of the country according to their taste and interest so that they do not suffer from learning disabilities. The publisher must produce a good book, and the government must create a culture and encourage people to read. The necessary information about what book to read should also be available.

Government support is a necessity when moving towards prosperity and developing a culture of reading. Low demand for books due to various reasons such as lack of interest in reading, no feeling of need, illiteracy, or low literacy of the society is another problem of the book profession so that the book does not have a good share of Iranian families' shopping carts. Proper upbringing of people who read books makes a person reduce the rituals of life despite the economic problems but does not reduce the purchase of books. Economic problems and the high cost of books can indeed affect demand. Still, it has been proven that the feeling of need prevails over costs like the monthly costs of the Internet and the purchase of new technological tools and accessories that have been the top priorities of people's lives at all levels of the economy. Textbooks and entrance exam books still have a special sale and position, which is very effective on distribution because low sales in bookstores cause low purchases from distributors. The fact is that in our society, culture building is not done well. It would be better if governments were spending money on creating a culture of reading to support the country's cultural sector to create the required bases for the culture of reading in society.

Institutions of Libraries and government can help books to be more accessible and increase variety and novelty and ease of access to public library books by increasing the number of public libraries and suitable books, the number of which is not small, so that despite the economic problems and the high cost of books, book problems lessen.

Many companies work as both publishers and distributors, producing books and distributing them to various retail outlets. Guild interference is one of the problems distribution

is facing. When publishers, distributors and booksellers do not follow their limits and work procedures, it causes serious damage to this cycle. Under the supervision and enforcement of the law, the publisher must produce, the distributor must distribute, and the bookseller must sell.

Despite separating the distribution profession from production, many publishers distribute their products so that their books do not go to the warehouse. But if the distribution is to be strong and large, the publisher can confidently produce, and the bookseller can only think of selling their book.

Marketing and advertising are among the factors that are very effective in advancing the goals of the book cycle to attract the audience and spread the culture of reading. Unfortunately, this sector lacks manpower and cannot spend the necessary costs in marketing and advertising to attract the audience and media due to low profits. Mass media are not present to create a reading culture and get people acquainted with the book. On the other hand, advertising can directly impact proper distribution in the distribution profession and help the circulation of books and the prosperity of this guild, which requires the support of the government, the ministry, and all stakeholders in the book industry. It is recommended that books and cultural goods be advertised in the national media free of charge or at a low cost.

Many people are interested in reading but do not know what to read and where to get their books. Indeed, distributors' thematic and specialized activity, a better understanding of the consumer community, an understanding of the community's needs, and a reflection of the needs of the production sector will increase the quality of books and the printing industry. With the specialized distribution of suitable books, the book is given to the right person at the right time. It is better if publishers are more active in the field of book placement, identify the books needed by society, and even create the work needed by ordering to the authors.

The lack of a comprehensive statistical and information system is one of the most important problems in the cultural field that has caused publishers, distributors, and booksellers not to have accurate information about the circulation of books and statistics of books sold and left in stock or published as new books. The circulation of information in the publishing market is an effective factor in increasing book sales. One of the best things the government can do is to provide this substructure with the participation of the private sector. A secure online system that advertises itself and simultaneously meets the customers' needs simultaneously will also be very effective.

Improving the situation of bookstores depends on government support and cooperation and promotes distribution. Loans, tax breaks, grants for purchasing or renting places or bookstores, establishing local bookstores, collecting provincial fairs, and licensing to use residential units are some examples of support. The government should enter the field more and better than before and pay attention to the demands of bookstores and their needs, which will not only make the distribution business flourish in the country but also change the publishing industry and the supply cycle of cultural products.

One of the distribution problems is the warehouse issue, which is often a small space. Some distributors have a warehouse off and on due to a lack of financial support. Faster shipping also requires storage. Expansion of warehouse means trade expansion and helps increase sales and provide better services to current and new customers.

Another important challenge and one of the important reasons for the lack of growth in the distribution in Iran is that not only is there no desire to establish new distribution centers, but

also their number is decreasing day after day because distributors cannot receive their claims from the bookstore on time while they are obliged to settle with the publisher in time. On the other hand, not only do distributors not benefit from the facilities available to publishers, but also the situation is such that they spend part of their revenue due to delays in their claims from booksellers elsewhere, and the reason for this disorder is the low profit of this profession. In fact, the lack of profitability in the book profession also causes the above problems so that the industry sometimes has to do other activities in addition to their profession to compensate for the costs, and the concentration and specialization of professional work will cause problems. Only through government support and spending can the industry grow and eliminate economic uncertainty.

Lack of low-interest loans harms the creation of professional jobs and economically creates a gap in the skilled labor force. A solution is needed because the lack of expert and skilled personnel in the specialized field of publishing, distribution, and sales will lead to more obstacles, problems, and a decline to train these forces in both the bookstore and distribution sectors. There is a need for efficient management and regular planning.

For the evolution of the publishing industry and publishing economy, Iranian publishers must change their attitude towards book marketing and take brilliant measures to achieve book marketing; otherwise, the per capita share of reading will not increase.

For successful sales in the market, the best way is to create a second market of production so that in the beginning, the market is fully identified and recreated for it, and then the product is produced. This will increase demand, and the book cycle will be activated. But in Iran, most goods are produced first, and then the market is created for them, and it often fails. The problem of market development is that solving this issue requires the government's serious attention to pay subsidies focused on more appropriate places.

It is confirmed that demand growth is necessary before production increment. The important point is that demand development can be implemented using appropriate methods and tools such as reforming the educational system, developing libraries, creating itinerant libraries, granting incentive subsidies, promoting attention to national culture, and holding permanent exhibitions throughout the country and in foreign countries where Iranians and Persian language countries are concentrated.

Increasing the private sector's ability in the publishing industry, reducing government ownership, and outsourcing the components of the publishing industry to publishers and creators are other parts of developing the substructures. This way, all-out government support can go a long way to end disruptions in this profession. As a link between publishers, booksellers and customers, distribution plays a vital role in the book distribution cycle. Therefore, an efficient distribution system is essential to have an efficient output to meet customer needs and make publishers' products available to customers in a good and manifold way.

Distributing printed books is more complicated than e-books; a physical product bears a longer process and much more costs (printing, logistics, shipping). The best way to reduce costs, maintain a high level of royalty, and reach a large audience is to use print-on-demand technology and an online distribution system. Not every book is easily placed on the bookshelves of bookstores, but it will be available to all customers in any digital store.

### Conclusion

Distribution channels of goods and cultural services in Iran are mainly traditional. Due to no use of new technologies, the long flow path of goods, a minimal share of bookstores in the distribution system, lack of reading culture, uneconomical distribution guild, lack of support for the distribution sector, weak distribution infrastructure, and lack of manpower skills in the distribution sector, and absence of capable public and private distribution networks, traditional distribution network causes book distribution network inefficiencies and consumer dissatisfaction. Transformation of the current situation from traditional to modern methods in the country is significant, with more attention from government and cultural officials and determining strategic policy by those involved in the book industry. Therefore, government support in the cultural, economic, substructural, political, and legal sectors strengthens, expands, and facilitates book distribution.

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