The Consequences of the Opposite Sex Friendships Among Teenage Girls; A Qualitative Research

Rana Karami[1]*, Roya Karami[2], Reza Rahbaran[3]

[1] Master of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, University of Tabriz, Iran,
[2] Master of General Psychology, University of Zanjan, Iran,
[3] Master of Clinical Psychology, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch, Iran.

*Corresponding Author

Abstract: *Over the past decades, the issue of relationship with the opposite sex has been highlighted in the Iranian society and has spread out among teens. In this research, the issue of teenagers' tendency to the opposite sex has been examined and the consequences of these relationships in teenage girls have been addressed. The population include the freshman and sophomore students of high school in Mianeh. 21 samples were collected and data was obtained using in-depth interview technique. The "Grounded theory" was selected as the research method. The findings were set based on the consequences of friendship with the opposite sex. Finally, the consequences of these relationships were arranged in two phases, "during a relationship" and "after a break-up", and each one was examined in both positive and negative dimensions.*

Keywords: *Relationship with the Opposite Sex, Teenager, Girl*

INTRODUCTION

Man has been created as a social and civil creature; therefore, he cannot survive without interacting with others (Mahallati, 2012). Human being has a social nature based on his nature and instinct, and affection among human beings is rooted in their nature. Thus, he/she expresses not only his/her love to other human beings, but to all living beings (Motahhari, 2013). Mohsenian-Rad (2003) considered human relationships as relationships in which human beings interact with each other. On the one hand, Refahi (2012), has stated about a healthy and unhealthy relationship: a close and intimate relationship is a relationship that satisfies human psychological needs; while, unhealthy relationships often generate redundant and sicklily psychological troubles for human. According to social psychologists, the closest relationship between two persons is a friendship that has a hearty, continuous, and close nature, and usually comes to the realization in a group of two or some. Friendship can be defined as the relative durability of emotional relationship between two individuals who are willing to cooperate with each other (Hanna and Brandt, 1995).

The emergence and formation of the relationship with the opposite sex during adolescence and its continuation to youth is one of the issues that has attracted particular attention of psychologists, because a teenager is sensitive to the opposite sex and he/she becomes aware of his/her sex differences and is stimulated to communicate with the opposite sex based on psychological, physiological and internal changes (Mahallati, 2012). Danfy (1972) found out that teenagers in the same-gender tend towards mixed-gender groups in early adolescence. Among the forces that increase at this time, is sexual force, so that through the sexual force stimulation, the physical balance of the adolescents is cluttered and he is persuaded to tend towards the

opposite sex (Ahmadi, 2003). However, each teenager has a special perception from this relationship, so the purpose of this kind of communication is diverse (Mahallati, 2012).

This is not the case, however, in western societies, these types of friendships are not only away from being faced with legal ban or a moral and customary prohibition, but also they are encouraged in the framework of the cultural liberalism ruling those societies (Soozanchi, 2013). Today, however, in most countries of the world, the relationship with opposite sex has expanded beyond the framework of accepted cultural rules and has raised concern among families and communities, as the consequences of this form of social interaction have also included Western societies. Although this form of social relationship is not inconsistent with the values and norms of Western societies, but its consequences such as the increased incidence of illegitimate children, single parents, derelict children and single parent children, and the risk of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) disease have been a concern for these communitie (Dokhtbahmani, 2016). In the relationship between girl and boy, they may be exposed to many harmful activities which don't appear to be abusive due to the existence of love in the relationship, but in fact they enter into damaged relationships and don't know about it themselves. In such relationships, one of the pairs misuses the other which may have a sexual and physical nature; even unwanted persons may be at risk of a dangerous situation such as sexual assault and pregnancy (Shahabadi and Soleimani, 2012).

However, Iranian society has always tried to preserve the family and marriage institution and has tried to persuade people to do this and to avoid the factors that threaten this institution. Because Islam has emphasized marriage, so that there is no basis more popular and valuable than marriage and family formation in Islam, and religion always encourages its followers to do that. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says: "Anyone who leaves the marriage due to fear of poverty, has bad feeling about God, because the Almighty God states that if they are poor, God will make them needless himself" (Makarem Shirazi, 1994).

In the relationships between girls and boys, the sexes of the parties are raised, and the emotions and affections of the parties are the main determinants. In this regard, there is a correlation between the sexual needs and the emotional abilities of the parties, and the separation of the two types is not possible in many cases. In addition, the meaning of the relationship between girl and boy is based on an intimate, warm and often secret relationship that the emotions and affections of the parties have a serious interference in this connection (Mahallati, 2012).

Various perspectives have emerged in explaining the relationship between girls and boys. In a view that has an extreme look at these relationships, it has been suggested that any relationship with opposite sex be free without any obstacle. In this regard, Freud and his followers claim that old-fashioned sex ethics have been based on restriction and prohibitions, and that all human problems are due to the prohibitions, deprivations, fears and panics caused by these prohibitions that have been replaced in human's mind (Motahhari, 1979). On the one hand, Russell (1966), in his book about marriage and ethics, considers this attitude and states that if there is no harm to others in doing something (sexual behaviour), there is no reason to condemn it. In other words, it has been said that any relationship with the opposite sex is rejected and criticized in the sentimental view. In criticizing this view, Russell (1966) states that the church fathers celebrate the marriage to the ugliest form, and they see the goal of austerity to make men more faithful. Therefore, marriage which was considered as an aggressive act, should be denied. In addition, a modest view is that in the relationship between girls and boys, neither absolute freedom is accepted, nor the limitation or prohibition of any relationship, but the relationship between two sexes can be realized within a certain framework. In this regard, some theorists refer to specific frameworks in the relationship between girls and boys, and refer to the concept of permitted communication which includes a minimal relationship, apart from any sexual and emotional motives in which the soul of relationship is not intended, but looking two sexes at each other is a human look, not sexual (Mahallati, 2012).

The main purpose of this research is to understand the consequences of the phenomenon of having relationship with the opposite sex in teenage girls, based on the qualitative method of grounded theory. The overall

assumption of this research is that the relationship with the opposite sex causes a series of consequences on a person's life. In qualitative research and in-depth investigations, instead of presumptions, research questions are used to achieve the desired goals (Gal et al., 2003).

The fundamental questions of this research, designed and implemented as the basic structure for an interview, are how does this relationship change teenager's life? What are the benefits and disadvantages which they have acquired? What does he/she gain after this relationship compared with her/his life before?

Research Method

The research method in this paper is based on qualitative research and using the "grounded theory" analysis method. The current research was conducted in Mianeh, East Azerbaijan province. The population of the study includes the female students attempting to communicate with the opposite sex in freshman and sophomore grades of high school. In-depth interview technique was used to collect data. In questionnaire designing, enough attention was paid to avoid orientation, and reviewed repeatedly with experts' opinions for better responses. The interviews were conducted at the school counseling office with the consent of the school counselors and participants.
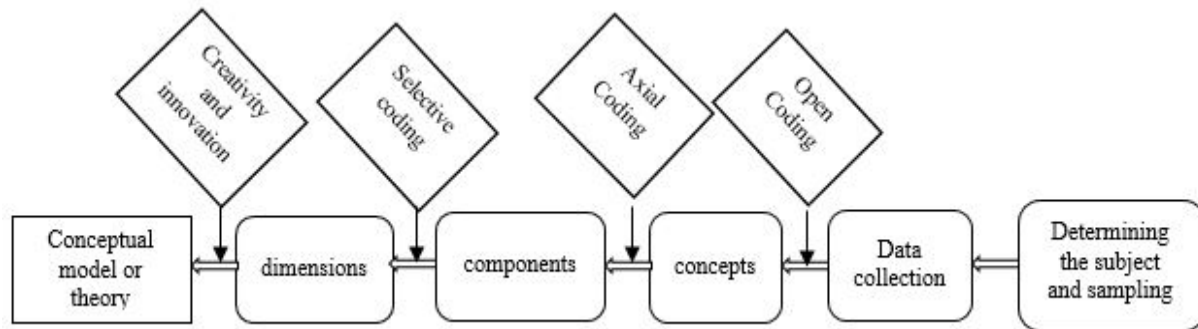
Sampling conducted in this research through purposive sampling method that is a subset of non-random sampling method. Sampling is based on snowball method. In other words, the interview continues until the information obtained from the participants in the study reaches the saturation point. In the current study, in collaboration with five advisors of freshman and sophomore grades (three and two in number, respectively), according to their previous knowledge of students, those who are trying to communicate with opposite sex were selected to conduct the interview. The total number of 21 interviewees was studied during one month. As a result of the interview, information in relation with in-depth, real life events and experiences of people with regard to the relationship with the opposite sex was obtained along with and the final analysis and interpretation of what was stated earlier. In order to carry out the analytical process, the text of the interviews was handwritten and manual coding method was used to analyze the data of the interviews. To convert the text into the codes, and then converting the codes into categories and classifying them, and achieving the alleged theory and its interpretation, three stages of open, axial, and selective coding were used, respectively.

The data collected to generate the theory are analyzed using "theoretical coding". In this way, at first, appropriate codes are assigned to different data sectors. These codes are determined as the "concept" called "open coding." Then, researcher proceeds to think about the different dimensions of these categories and find the links between them with "axial coding." Finally, the "selective coding" of the categories is refined and through these processes, a theoretical framework emerges (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

The research process is as follows:

1. Open coding in order to reach the concepts and categories according to the collected data
2. Axial coding in order to provide a conceptual model and explain the relationship between categories and concepts
3. Analyzing and unifying the concepts and categories by using selective coding for theorizing

The developed model of the process for implementing the grounded theory is as follows.

Figure 1: The developed model of grounded theory implementation process

In the current study, the labels including numbers were given to the codes extracted from the text of the interviews using open coding, and this process was carried out in some texts in several rounds of coding. Then the classification of codes based on similar characteristics, common features and the appropriateness of them were dealt by using axial coding, and comparing the codes with each other and with other data obtained from the interviews simultaneously and the categories were obtained and named based on their themes and common contents.

Then, all the categories and subject classes were integrated and combined using selective coding. In this stage, hypotheses were extracted from the final categories which led to the formation of two main conceptual classes in the section of the factors affecting the formation of relationship with opposite sex and three conceptual classes in the section of factors affecting the continuity of the relationship with the opposite sex. In the outcomes section, the results were also divided into two phases: "outcomes during a relationship" and "outcomes after a break-up" and two dimensions of positive and negative outcomes were found on both phases.

After formulating a theory, the grounded theorist validates the process by comparing it with the existing processes found in the professional background. Also, external reviewers such as those who participated in this scheme and judged grounded theory using "good" benchmarks, may prove that the theory is based on the validity and reliability of the data (Creswell, 2005).

Findings

After the first stage of coding (open coding) with regard to the consequences of the relationship with the opposite sex, 47 codes were obtained from the data text. The initial extraction codes were then categorized according to the secondary axial coding and were named based on the similarity of the content with other categories. Categories derived from secondary coding are developed by selective coding, i.e. they are reorganized, and categories are converted into subcategories and categorized dominant categories.

By dividing the consequences of establishing a relationship with opposite sex during the adolescence, we reach to a more comprehensive and more precise look at two areas of "outcomes in the relationship" and "outcomes after the breakup", and we are going to get away from stereotyped response. After conducting the interview process and according to three open, axial and selective coding processes, these codes were ultimately set in 20 main categories and finally these categories were arranged in two dimensions: "positive outcomes" and "negative outcomes".

Sample codes obtained from the first stage coding:

Table 1: The sample extracted codes in interview texts about effects of having relationship

life as full of tension	unhappy marriage	angriness	rhyme with sleep disorder	academic decline	depression and seclusion	feeling of blessedness	constant fight with mother
secrecy	mental torture	becoming a smoker	aggression	scandal and disgrace	physical weakness	scarify	suicide

The consequences of the relationships that are in the process and haven't still led to separation and break-up, are organized in two positive and negative dimensions. The positive outcomes include: feeling of calmness and confidence, feeling of happiness and blessedness, feeling of joyfulness and motivation. Negative outcomes include: constant stress in life with relatives, especially parents, mental conflicts and dream something, wasting time, neuroticism and irascibility, academic decline and academic failure, rhyme with sleep disorder, experience of severe stress, mistrustful of parents and blame on them, depression and seclusion.

In the area of "outcomes after break-up," according to interviews, no positive components were observed. However, the negative outcomes include: expressing regret about the past, mental torture and loss of mental balance, mistrustful of the father and mother, despair of life and attempted suicide and scarify, become addicted (smoking), excessive pessimism in order to the opposite sex, make a habit of diverse relationships but short and cross-sectional run, unwilling to get married, aggression and physical weakness (including anemia and palpitation and so on), marriage led to divorce, threatened by sex opponent (boy), scandal and disgrace of girl, and ultimately severe family conflicts (disputes).

Table 2: The effects of having relationship with opposite sex

selective coding result			axial coding result	open coding result
subject	axes	dimensions	main categories	the number of the codes or concepts
effects of opposite sex friendships	outcomes in the relationship	positive	1. feeling of calmness and confidence 2. feeling of happiness and blessedness 3. creation of joyfulness and motivation	1-4-7-10-13-16
		negative	1. constant stress in life with relatives, especially parents 2. mental conflicts and dream something 3. wasting time 4. neuroticism and irascibility 5. academic decline and academic failure 6. rhyme with sleep disorder 7. experience of severe stress 8. mistrustful of parents and blame on them 9. depression and seclusion	2-5-8-11-14-17-19-21-23-25-27-29-31-33-35-37-39-41-43-45
	outcomes after break-up	positive	----------	------
		negative	1. expressing regret about the past 2. make a habit of diverse relationships but short and cross-sectional run 3. unwilling to get married 4. mental torture and loss of mental balance 5. mistrustful of the father and mother 6. despair of life and attempted suicide and scarify 7. become addicted (smoking) 8. excessive pessimism in order to the opposite sex 9. aggression and physical weakness (including anemia and palpitation and so on) 10. marriage led to divorce 11. threatened by sex opponent (boy) 12. scandal and disgrace of girl 13. severe family conflicts (disputes)	3-6-9-12-15-18-20-22-26-24-28-30-32-34-36-38-40-42-44-46-47

10 out of the 21 adolescents had experience in friendship failure/break-up. One person was continuing the relationship. The relationship of one person had already resulted in marriage, and then divorce. As shown in the graph below, 52.38% of the samples had an experience of a failed relationship, and 47.61% of the samples were continuing the relationship. In all samples, the relationship has been reported between 2-3 months to 3 years.
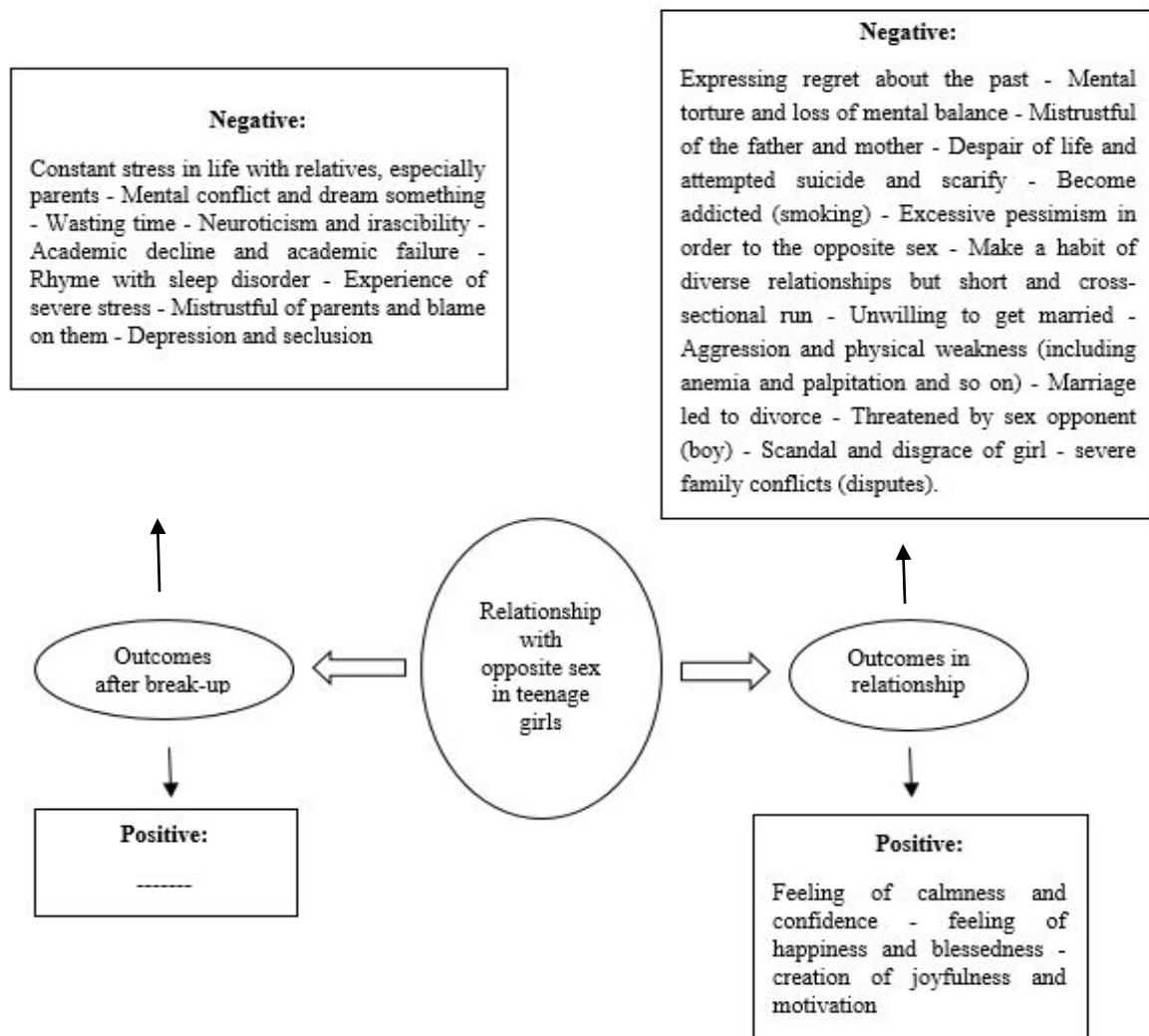
Results and Discussion

On the onset of the friendship relationship, both girls and boys share their sexual and emotional interests and are pleased with this friendship which leads to intermittent and temporary pleasures. And they are keen on continuity and sustainability of this relationship. After a while, due to losing interest in pairs especially boys and a superficial relationship or because one of the pairs has taken his/her sexual advantage or emotion, this relationship is failed. Although rare examples can be seen about the relationships leading to marriage and family formation, but first the reliability and quality of life of these people should be discussed, and second, any general rule has its own exceptions that do not result in undermining the general principle. In the samples investigated in the current study, only one marriage has been observed which has led to divorce.

By examining the consequences of the relationship with the opposite sex in two phases, "during a relationship" and "after a break-up", it was concluded that in the first phase, although it has the seemingly positive outcomes such as the feeling of calmness and confidence, feeling of happiness and blessedness, the feeling of joyfulness and so on for teenagers, it is based on a shaky relationship, and is exposed to collapse and destruct. Taking into account the negative consequences of this relationship which includes expressing regret about the past, mental torture and loss of mental balance, mistrustful of the father and mother, attempted suicide and scarify, despair of life such as death dream, become addicted (smoking), excessive pessimism in order to the opposite sex, make a habit of diverse relationships but short and cross-sectional run, unwilling to get married, aggression and physical weakness (including anemia and palpitation and so on), marriage led to divorce, threatened by sex opponent (boy), and so on. Mohammadi and Mohammadi concluded in their research that teenagers experience consequences of the relationship with the opposite sex in various forms such as academic problems, conflicts of mental space, emotional pleasure, sexual pleasure, dependency, diversity, celibacy, fear of marriage and rethinking.

We conclude that the harms caused by these relationships, which are sometimes accompanied by the individuals up to the end of the life, is far more serious than their passing advantages and disadvantages. According to the data results based on the absence of positive outcomes after break-up for teenager, it follows that these short-term and superficial benefits are also seen only "in the relationship" and teenager get bored "after a failure and break-up". While emotional and mental health of a teenager determines his/her physical, mental and emotional factors for the future, entry into this relationship with respect to the results is a major threat for healthy development of him/her.

Figure 2 presents the implications of the relationship between male and female opposite sex in the form of a comprehensive theoretical model:

Negative:

Constant stress in life with relatives, especially parents - Mental conflict and dream something - Wasting time - Neuroticism and irascibility - Academic decline and academic failure - Rhyme with sleep disorder - Experience of severe stress - Mistrustful of parents and blame on them - Depression and seclusion

Negative:

Expressing regret about the past - Mental torture and loss of mental balance - Mistrustful of the father and mother - Despair of life and attempted suicide and scarify - Become addicted (smoking) - Excessive pessimism in order to the opposite sex - Make a habit of diverse relationships but short and cross-sectional run - Unwilling to get married - Aggression and physical weakness (including anemia and palpitation and so on) - Marriage led to divorce - Threatened by sex opponent (boy) - Scandal and disgrace of girl - severe family conflicts (disputes).

Outcomes after break-up

Relationship with opposite sex in teenage girls

Outcomes in relationship

Positive:

Positive:

Feeling of calmness and confidence - feeling of happiness and blessedness - creation of joyfulness and motivation

Figure 2: The theoretical model of effects of having relationship with opposite sex in teenage girls

Suggestions:

In general, several categories of required solutions can be identified as follows:

1. Studying the scientific research works on problems of adolescents, by community custodians and planning and decision making based on it
2. Providing healthy lifestyle education to people
3. Informing parents about the relationship between teenager and the opposite sex
4. Informing teenagers about the relationship with the opposite sex
5. Teaching about the manner of behaving with a teenager by parents
6. Parental supervision over the choice for teenagers about the group of friends
7. Making the virtual space healthy
8. The presence of dedicated and compassionate psychologists at schools for addressing the psychological problems of students
9. Continuous identification of harmful cultural issues in teenagers and their reflection to the executive authorities of the country to adopt the necessary measures

References

1. The Holy Quran.
2. Ahmadi, Seyyed Ahmad, 2003, Psychology of Adolescents and Youth, Isfahan, Besat Publication.
3. Creswell, J. W. (2005), Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research 2nd edition.
4. Dokhtbahmani, Mohsen, Mohammadi, Fardin, the tendency to communicate with opposite sex, Social Issues Journal, No. 1, pp. 184-163, 2016.
5. Gall, Meredith, Borg, Walter, Gall, Joyce, 2003, Quantitative and qualitative research methods in education and psychology, Ahmad Reza Nasr et al., Tehran: Organization of studying and compiling humanities textbooks in the Humanities (SAMT), Shahid Beheshti University.
6. Hanna, N. A., & Berndt, T. J. (1995). Relations between friendship, group acceptance, and evaluations of summer camp. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 15(4), 456-475.
7. Mahallati, Fahimeh, 2012, Relations in Architecture, Tehran, Basij Student Organization Publication.
8. Makarem Shirazi, Nasser et al., 1994, Sample Interpretation, Vol. 14, Tehran, Dar Al kotob Al Islamiyah
9. Mohammadi, Fardin, Mohammadi, Hossein, 2016, Qualitative Study on the Consequences of Relationship with opposite sex in the teenage girls and boys, Social Studies and Researches in Iran, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 662-641.
10. Mohsenian-Rad, Mehdi, 2003, Communication, Tehran, Soroush Publication.
11. Motahhari, Morteza, 1979, Sexual Ethics, Tehran, Jihad of Construction.
12. Motahhari, Morteza, 2013, Philosophy of Ethics, Tehran, Sadra Publication.
13. Refahi, Jaleh, Goodarzi, Mahmoud and Mirzaei, Morteza, A Survey on the Effective Factors on the Formation of Premarital Friendship between Girls and Boys from the Students' views, Journal of Research in Women's Sociology, No. 1, pp. 133-117, 2012.
14. Russell, Bertrand, 1966, World I Know, Translation by Ruhollah Abbasi, Tehran, Amirkabir Publication.
15. Shahabadi, Akbar, Soleimani, Zakieh, Investigating Factors Related to Student tendency and Premarital Relationships in Yazd University, Journal of Social Welfare, No. 45, pp. 364-339, 2012.
16. Soozanchi, Hosein, Providing Islamic Framework for Sexual Health of Girls, Islamic Specialty Quarterly and Social Studies, First Year, No. 1, Summer 2013. p. 27
17. Strauss, Anselm, Corbin, Juliet, 2008, Principles of Qualitative Research Methodology: Basic Theory, Procedures and Practices, Translation by Biuk Mohammadi, Tehran, Research Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 2nd Edition