

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part focuses on the qualitative findings, which answer research questions 1 to 4. The second part of the chapter gives attention to the quantitative data analysis. It focuses on hypotheses 1 to 4.

4.2 Data Analysis

This section begins with the introduction of the participants who had participated in the qualitative data collection. Next, the section will present the qualitative findings of the research.

4.2.1 Descriptive Characteristics of the Participants

The participants in the qualitative data analysis were 12 counsellor trainees who have completed all their course works as required by the Guidance and Counselling graduate program. Of the 12 participants, nine were Chinese and three were Malays. In term of genders, four were male and eight participants were female. The average age of the

participants was 27.25 years old. One participant majored in guidance and counselling and three have a minor in counselling at their undergraduate level. In terms of previous experience leading groups, all the participants answered “Yes”. Their group experiences included leading guidance group and counselling group with children and adults. Two participants had conducted group counselling in the hospital setting with cancer patients and the support staff, four were volunteers who conduct children's group activities in their hometowns, two had worked with the homeless, and the other four had conducted group works with school children. All the trainees have volunteered to participate in this study and were willing to share their experience dealing with conflicts in group counselling. The detail information of the participants is shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Brief Description of the Interview Participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Ethnic Group	Counselling (Major/Minor)	Previous Experience Leading Group
A	26	M	Chinese	No	Yes
B	26	M	Chinese	Minor	Yes
C	26	M	Chinese	No	Yes
D	27	F	Chinese	No	Yes
E	25	F	Chinese	No	Yes
F	28	F	Chinese	No	Yes
G	26	M	Chinese	Minor	Yes
H	35	F	Malay	No	Yes
I	27	F	Chinese	No	Yes

J	28	F	Malay	Major	Yes
K	26	F	Malay	No	Yes
L	26	F	Chinese	Minor	Yes

Following is some personal information about the participants. Participant A was a 26 year-old Chinese male. He was an active member in the Buddhist society. He often volunteered to help his old school with student programs. He had experience in organizing events and giving motivational talks to school students. He conducted counselling groups with groups of problem teenagers. He found it easy to empathize with them. To him, leading group was both a responsibility and a learning process. Seeing his group members progress in life becomes his source of motivation to pursue a career in counselling.

Participant B was a 26 year-old Chinese male. He had experience leading stress management, anger management, and grief groups from the psycho-educational and counselling perspectives. His group experiences involved working with school students, university undergraduates, and hospital inpatients and outpatients. He was interested in helping clients develop internal locus of control and have new perspective to life issues. Group works enabled him to help more individuals at a time compared to the individual counselling.

Participant C was a 26 year-old Chinese male. He enjoyed leading groups and had experience working with school children during his university years. He believed in the

group power to help members come face to face with their real self. Only by doing that, according to him, individuals could move forward in their life.

Participant D was a 27 year-old Chinese female. She worked part-time as a swimming instructor and did volunteer work with the non-governmental agencies during her free time. To her, group was her source of knowledge about people. Group allowed her to learn about human attitudes and their coping strategies to everyday life problem.

Participant E was a 25 year-old Chinese female. She conducted group counselling with school students and discovered the experience to be self-fulfilling. She liked working with the youngsters, particularly in guiding them to solve life developmental issues. Through the group process, she believed group members would develop better self-awareness and become more positive in their life.

Participant F was a 28 year-old Chinese female. She had experience conducting group counselling with university students. She wanted to help others make positive changes in their life. Even though she was new, she was passionate about the counselling profession. During her free time, she would do some volunteer work with the non-governmental agencies. She would consult those with more experience working with groups for advice and new ideas to improve her counselling skills.

Participant G was a 26 year-old Chinese male. He had experience working with chronically ill patients within the hospital setting and problem students. He enjoyed group works especially as they provided the opportunity for him to bond with other

people. This bonding experience, he stressed, allowed people to feel supported and appreciated by others, which then led to positive changes in their personal life.

Participant H was a 35-year old Malay female. She had several years of teaching experience before continuing her study in counselling. To her, the knowledge and skills she acquired from the program enhanced her understanding of other people. Through group counselling, she learned to help others, and at the same time gained insight into her own life. Her volunteer work at the orphanage opened her eyes to the many possibilities of how she could help the less fortunate.

Participant I was a 27 year-old Chinese female. She had attended several spiritually based camps during her university years and discovered the soul-searching experience to be enlightening. She valued the group experience she had with school children and teenagers. To her, group members were the reflection of who she was before and might be in the future. They formed parts of her. By working and helping them solve their personal issues, she, directly and indirectly became more in touch with her own issue. The experience helped her gain personal awareness of her vulnerabilities and strengths as a person.

Participant J was a 28 year-old Malay female. She had worked with groups of school children and university students. She enjoyed helping others deal with their problems because when they were happy she also became happy.

Participant K was a 26 year-old Malay female. To her leading groups was a quite challenge. She was happy to see people change for the better. Even small progress group

members made in their life was enough to make her efforts feel worthwhile. Her role model was her school-counsellor aunt. She often consulted her for ideas and suggestions whenever she conducted groups.

Finally, the last participant, L, was a 26 year-old Chinese female. She wanted to become a professional helper. To her, conducting group provided a two-way learning opportunity for her. As she shared her experience with the group, she also learned from their sharing.

In brief, all the participants had developed passion for the counselling profession. They enjoyed working with groups and helping members make progress in their life. They had experienced the power of group in initiating changes in members. Along the process, they also observed their personal development in term of self-awareness and motivation. They hoped to become competent counsellors who were able to conduct group counselling effectively.

4.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

The data for the qualitative analysis was obtained from semi-structured interviews with 12 counsellor trainees from the Guidance and Counselling graduate program at the Faculty of Educational Studies, UPM. The data collection was analyzed for the emerging themes and subthemes and was supported by verbatim from the interview transcripts. See Table 8. The unique experience of the trainees was explored in the data analysis. Part one of data analysis findings addressed the following research objectives:

1. to explore the counsellor trainees' experience with conflict in group counselling.

- 2. to explore the counsellor trainees’ conflict management strategies in managing conflict in group counselling.
- 3. to explore the counsellor trainees’ attitude towards conflicts in group counselling.
- 4. to explore the counsellor trainees’ perceptions of group leadership functions during conflict in group counselling.

Table 8: Research Objectives, Themes and Subthemes of the Qualitative Data Analysis

Research Objectives	Themes	Subthemes
To explore the counsellor trainees’ experience with conflict in group counselling	Definitions of conflict	Disagreement in ideas
	Triggering factors	Counterproductive behaviours Personality differences Expression of negative emotions Communication style Discussion of sensitive issues Incompetent leader
	Conflict development	Disrespectful behaviours Defensive behaviours Reluctant to share Lack of progress
To explore the counsellor trainees’ conflict management strategies in managing conflict in group counselling.	Conflict styles	Avoiding Third party
	Group skills	Attending skills Confronting skill Blocking skill Facilitating skill
	Personal Creativity	Activity Personality assessment
To explore the counsellor trainees’ attitude towards conflicts in group counselling	Affective component	Negative emotions Overt expressions Physiological changes
	Conflict scripts	Conflict as resistance Conflict as weakness Conflict as failure

	Behaviour component	Conflict is growth Stop it Ignore it Become quiet Turn aggressive Analyze it
To explore the counsellor trainees' perceptions of group leadership functions during conflict in group counselling	Group Leadership	Leadership skills Personal disposition
	Leadership roles	As a leader As a catalyst As a participator
	Leadership functions	Providing meaning Facilitating sharing Executive function Providing support

4.3.1 Research Objective No.1: to explore the counsellor trainees' experience with conflict in group counselling.

Twelve counsellor trainees were asked two questions. The questions were (1) What is your definition of conflict in group counselling? and (2) What is your experience with conflicts in group counselling? The first question explored the trainees' definitions of the word "conflict" as it relates to group counselling and the factors triggering the conflict. The second question explored the trainees' experience with conflict as it happened in the group. For this research question, three themes emerged which were: (i) definitions of conflict, (ii) triggering factors, and (iii) conflict development. The question hoped to capture the meaning of conflict, the underlying causes that led to its occurrence and the trainees experience with conflict.

Definitions of Conflict

Conflict may encompass verbal and nonverbal behaviour. It can be about one's goal being blocked or it can involve differences in perceptions. Under this theme, one subtheme "disagreement in ideas" was identified.

Disagreement in ideas

In a group situation where individuals from various backgrounds get together to share their issues, disagreement in ideas and perceptions are bound to happen. In a counselling group where sharing exists at the personal level, disagreement among members could easily trigger conflicts or personal friction between them. Several trainees observed that conflict was related to differences in perceptions, ideas, issues, values, attitudes, and experiences.

Every individual in the group is unique and different from each other, and it is normal for counsellor trainees to expect conflicts to happen. And, as the number of group members increases more differences need to be tolerated. Participants A, C, D, I, F, and L shared their definitions of conflict.

Disagreement. The conflict in group counselling refers to a narrower term compared to having a personal conflict. To me, conflict in group counselling refers to a disagreement between members or disagreement about the issue discussed. ... Group counselling consists of a few individuals coming to join the session. And all of them lead a different life and go through different experience on how they view things. That is why conflict happens. For example, these two Malay members who were raised in different environments, one was raised in a very strict family whereas the other grew up in a lenient family. So, when they discussed the topic on how to raise a child, both of them will have a conflict on

that issue because of their personal background and experience. (Participant D, 80-81, 87-92)

It refers to the misunderstanding or wrong interpretations among the group members and perhaps the group members with the leader. (Participant L, 91-92)

I think, conflict in a group involves more than one individual. Different people have different values and opinions. For example, seven people will have seven values, or they will have different ways of looking at things in the group. (Participant F, 54-56)

As a whole, the trainees defined conflict as being the disagreement in ideas, perceptions, and values, and experiences between different individuals. Conflict is about one's perception or one's value against another person. Conflict involves more than one person and is very likely to happen as the number of individuals involved increases.

Triggering Factors

There are several factors involved in the creation of conflict. These triggering factors could be one's verbal expression, behaviour, or emotions. They could be easily observed during the interaction or were embedded in the member's communication pattern. Six subthemes have been identified which are: (i) counterproductive behaviours, (ii) personality differences, (iii) expression of negative emotions, (iv) communication style, (v) discussion of sensitive issue, and (vi) incompetent leader.

Counterproductive behaviours

It is undeniable that differences are the source of conflict, but how the discrepancies provoke conflict may not be similar in every situation. The trainees identified several counterproductive behaviours that accompanied conflict episodes. Participants B, I, and

K highlighted behaviours like challenging other's ideas, using strong words, and imposing one's values on other members as the behaviours that could easily spark off frictions in the group.

When there is an interaction between group members, a contradiction in terms of experience will take place. Someone may challenge certain members or do personal attack rather than talking about the issue. That's when conflict happens in group counselling. (Participant B, 91-94)

From my experience, when some members started to say, "Hey, this is not the way," or "Your way is not correct," or "Please listens to our way." That's when I think conflict is in the group. (Participant I, 68-70)

Conflict happens when there is conflicting ideas or values. One person tries to impose his value on another person. This person would not accept because she also has her own value. So, conflict happens when one person couldn't accept another person's value. This also can cause conflict in itself. (Participant K, 98-101)

Another participant, I, mentioned that wanting to do something different from the routine could also trigger conflicts. As group developed, the group slowly gained its autonomy as an entity of its own. Members started to have ideas on how they wanted to run the group. This new idea might go against the structure established by the leader, and thus may trigger conflict.

We are different. Maybe in the beginning, they didn't show, they just followed. But, at some point, they thought following the leader was no more correct. They have their own opinion, so they voiced out. At the point when they voiced out that was the conflict. (Participant I, 70-72)

Behaviours that are not promoting group cohesiveness, which run against the establishment of a supportive social system may create friction within the group. Members come with the expectations that they all would be able to work together regardless of their differences. Yet, certain negative behaviours by some members might

ward off group progress. When this happens, they become restless and start to retaliate, thus open the door for conflicts.

Personality differences

Every member brings into the group his or her own personality. Personality refers to dispositions or qualities of a person. Personality influences one's actions and attitudes towards other people or object in the environment. Participants A, D, G, J, and F described how diversity in personalities provoked conflict.

Conflict happens because in the counselling group there are many types of personalities. Furthermore, their thoughts and experience would be different. When these thoughts and experiences meet together, conflict will happen.... The kinds of personalities that can create conflict include aggressive, narcissistic, unwillingness to change, and involuntary clients. (Participant G, 88-90, 152-153)

A group will have a conflict when it involves all group members. As a leader, I perceive the group as having conflict when there is a dominant or non-cooperative or member who likes to argue. ... Each member has different characteristics. Maybe one member agrees to an issue, but others may not. Or, a member says she feels this way but others may feel differently. The member who thinks he is right or a member who is rigid in his thinking. When other members speak, he becomes defensive. He could not accept other people experience. So, when there is a clash in personality, conflict may happen. (Participant J, 88-90, 103-108)

Some personality characteristics may work for or against the group goals. Having members who are rigid in their thinking or who are not open to different view may pose quite a challenge for the group and the leader as well.

On the other hand, thinking that other people may share similar experience, values or perspective could also create conflict in the group. It is like not acknowledging the rights

of members to lead life according to their unique personality. The situation is best described by H, who said,

I mean less understanding between group members and one person does not want to understand other people. They think everyone is the same. Usually that's make conflict. They think everyone is the same. They think that when you handle a problem, everyone will handle the problem the same way. So, when that happens, there will be conflict. If they accept everyone is different and the way they handle problem also different, there won't be any conflict. But, when they don't understand that and they're not aware that people are unique, there will be conflict. (H, 193-199)

Another observation regarding personality has to do with the rate of personal development experienced by group members. Some members are willing to take the risk and make changes in their life but some prefer to remain within their comfort zone. These differences in motivation was observed by participant G. He said,

I think conflict can also happen when we have some people who want to move forward but some people who didn't. They want to keep to their comfort zone. They didn't want to share. (C, 195-197)

Certain personality characteristics may be a threat to group work, which requires the members to show support, respectful behaviours, openness to new experience, and willingness to change. Having an absolute thinking about group members like assuming everyone is different from him or her or believing they all share similar values may provoke conflict.

Expression of negative emotions

Besides the differences in ideas, opinions, and values among the group members, emotions can also aggravate conflicts. Negative emotions, whether they develop within

the group or carry over from personal experience, can cause frictions in the group. Members are normally not comfortable with expression of negative emotions within the group. Participants A and K shared their observations of how negative emotions affected interaction patterns in the group.

Emotions also can create conflict. When one of the members got very angry, his anger could affect other members. Their emotions were being affected by this member. They could not be calmed down. They got emotionally distress because they had different point of views. (Participant A, 87-90)

Conflict in group counselling is more to personal conflict. Maybe member had experienced being cheated by friends or members wanted to discuss about their dissatisfaction with their friends. For example, she has a conflict because her friend has met a new friend. So, all the conflicts the members experienced are discussed. To me, that's also conflict. Frustration can be the cause of conflict. (Participant K, 80-85)

Emotion is contagious and it can affect more than one member. Members experience certain emotions as reactions to what happened in the group as well as from events in their personal life. Members become easily upset when their opinions differ from other members or when they have unresolved conflict outside the group.

Communication style

Communication style refers to the verbal and nonverbal sharing of information among group members. The sharing could be about one's experience or idea relayed through certain words, intonation or nonverbal expression. Open communication allows for two ways sharing between members. Members feel safe and secure to express their ideas and feelings. Sometimes poor communication style is being observed during conflict. Members feel threatened to express their ideas freely. This situation triggers uncomfortable feelings or misunderstanding among the parties involved.

Two participants, E and L, noticed that lack of communication between members led to misunderstanding, personal judgment, and finally conflict. When members did not try to clear the air, they gave others the freedom to interpret their stories. Participant E shared her experience with the incident. She said,

In the group, of course the members have different kind of opinions or ideas. Let say a person has a very contrasting idea with "this person", and maybe conflict happen between them. And, the misunderstanding between them is actually due to lack of communication. Maybe the person says something but another person gets the wrong meaning from the person. (Participant E, 66-70)

The use of strong words or expressions is also dominant during conflict. Members use strong words to force their ideas on another person. It is also an attempt to state one's superiority over the other. This style of communication creates feelings of insecurity and anxiety, making the group feel uneasy. Participants L and I shared their observations.

Sometimes group members gave their opinion and suggestion during a serious situation and they used some "firm" words. It caused the conflict to develop. (Participant L, 92-94)

From my experience, when members started to say "Hey, this is not the way," or "Your way is not correct," or "Please listen to our way." That's when I think conflict is in the group. (Participant I, 68-70)

Certain style of communication is observed during conflict. Members are not given ample time to explain about their situation, or some forceful words are used to obstruct the communication flow. When these happen, interaction is abruptly stopped and members start to act uneasy.

Discussion of sensitive issue

Another participant, K, shared that a leader who allowed discussion of sensitive issue might put the group on the precipice of conflict.

If the group does not touch on sensitive issues, the conflict will not happen. If the group discussion only focuses on how to find jobs, and it does not underestimate others, conflict would not happen. But, if they discuss about something serious and members start to have some negative perception about each other, then conflict may happen. (Participant K, 113-116)

Discussion of sensitive issues could easily spark outburst of emotions. Sensitive issues have to be dealt with cautious because as sharing among members become more personal, judgments and perceptual biases might start to form within the group. These judgments could work against the goodness of the group and cause the members to feel uneasy.

Incompetent leader

Finally, participant H shared another valuable observation. She noted that differences in opinions among members were normal but if the leader failed to apply appropriate skills to engineer the argument into a constructive exchange of ideas, then conflict might happen.

Maybe the group members are discussing about something and they are quarrelling. The leader is aware of the conflict but does not know how to handle it. That's a conflict. Or, it can be leadership conflict. Or, it can be conflict that the members bring about themselves and the leader also doesn't know how to tend to that. (Participant H, 75-78)

Counsellors who lack the knowledge and skills of how to manage conflict constructively may worsen the already bad situation. Wrong intervention by the leader may cause the conflict to continue. Sometimes this could lead to a twist in the situation. Instead of the conflict being between the members, now it is turned into leader-members conflict.

As a whole, the trainees shared their observations of the triggering factors that might precipitate conflict in the group counselling. The factors include counterproductive behaviours, personality, emotions, communication styles, discussion of sensitive issues, and an incompetent leader. These factors are the catalyst to misunderstanding, wrong interpretation, perceptual bias, and negative judgment made towards other members and towards the leader.

Conflict Development

Conflict development refers to the progressive development of conflict in the group. It reflects the changes in behaviours, emotions, group dynamics, interaction patterns, and the group progress as a whole. To understand whether a member of the group is having a conflict, the trainees observed the behaviour and emotional changes portrayed in the group. Since different individuals reacted differently during conflict, the trainees looked for clues in the members' body language, facial expression, intonation, and actions to understand how they were affected. From their sharing, four subthemes are identified including: (i) disrespectful behaviours, (ii) defensive behaviours, (iii) reluctant to share, and (iv) lack of progress.

Disrespectful behaviours

During conflict, individuals have the tendency to engage in disrespectful behaviours towards one another. Disrespectful behaviours are the behaviours performed with the intention to cause embarrassment or to degrade, or to make the other person uncomfortable. These contemptuous behaviours include talking with loud voice, using

strong words, making degrading comments or behaviours, attacking others, leaving the group without permission, and invading other's privacy. Participants C, H and L shared some of the disrespectful behaviours they encountered in their groups.

Members do not want to work. They just want to play because they did not come with the intention to work. They formed their own group in the group. Regardless of what I said, they still supported each other and continued to talk among themselves. Their attitudes and voice intonation were not in harmony. When one member said something, the group attacked back. They looked for something small to attack and they looked angry. When other members spoke, they did not want to listen. Sometimes they physically left the group. (Participant C, 75 - 81)

From facial expression. Sometimes I saw them frown. The whole face changed and they said something at the back. Maybe they whispered to other members. And I knew that she didn't believe it or she didn't like the statement. ... So, I knew that something was wrong. I could see from my group, this person was quite slow. When she talked, she was like talking very slow and then her friend would say that, "Wei, louder please. Nobody can hear you". So, from the tone, I knew she didn't like it. Sometimes when she is holding things, they would grab it and take it away from her. So, I knew something is wrong. They did not like her. And, they were not trying to understand her even though I asked them to. (Participant H, 101 - 103, 104 - 109)

Mostly from the words coming out from their mouth. Sometimes it's too straight forward and some people could not take it. They would use some keywords like, "you should", "you must", thus making the other person felt uncomfortable. They would talk in loud voice, leaning forward with their eyes wide open, staring at the person. Just like scolding, but actually not scolding. In the group, A gave some suggestions to B to solve his problem. A said to B, "You should try "this", "this", and "this". It is based on A personal values and perceptions. If B possessed some ego kind of characteristic, he would not take advice and suggestion in such a firm and straight forward way. Perhaps he would reject because B thought A was scolding him. (Participant L, 109 - 117)

Furthermore, disrespectful behaviours could be seen through the member's direct objection to the trainees' suggestion, or one's manipulative behaviour towards another member's sincere gesture. Participant A felt confronted by the group when his idea was

blatantly rejected by the members, while participant D saw the art of questioning being manipulated to serve one's needs. Following are some excerpts from their sharing.

Sometime it is very obvious. For example, when I asked the group to discuss certain issue and the other member directly disagreed with the topic. It was a direct confrontation. (Participant A, 112 - 114)

Question. Normally, when one person is sharing after a question, the person who questioned wants to hear her personal opinion. But, the other member would be confronting her, and the third, would be saying directly, "I disagree with you." Normally when a person asks a question they are curious. But, when there is conflict or disagreement voice is slightly raised. The way they ask question is a bit rude but it does not happen all the time. The thing is that after they ask question, they will voice out their personal view. But, they are not really interested in the answer. The question is a mean to tell the other person what he thinks. (Participant D, 97 - 104)

As noticed by the trainees, behaviours that showed disrespect towards others were not condoned in group counselling. Talking in high pitch, showing aggressive behaviours, forcing one's idea on others, forming subgroup, making direct objection, and being manipulative were counterproductive to promoting therapeutic environment in the group. When these behaviours became part of the group dynamics, they prevented the group from forming a caring, supportive, and empathic environment for the members.

Defensive behaviours

Some counsellor trainees read the signs of conflict through the group members' defensive behaviours. Participants F, K, and L described the defensive behaviours as the members resisting help extended to them by other group members. Participant F shared her experience dealing with defensive members. To her, the members tried to protect

themselves from being hurt or from seeing their weaknesses through lack of eye contact, closed body language, and used of sarcastic words. She said,

When they voiced out their perceptions or values and they tried to defend themselves. Or, they disagreed with another person who has different value from them. From facial expression meaning not happy face. Their gestures too like crossing their arms in front of the chest, and staring. And, some people just listened but not looking at the person who was speaking. No respect. ... I saw this kind of person in the group. They have different thinking. When they came to the group, it would be hard for them to be together and discuss some of the topics they wanted. They would be arguing with one another. Their body language and the way he or she talked using sarcastic words like "I don't think that", "I disagree with that", or tried to reject or defend another person. For example in one session, we discussed about conflict management. So, my partner and I asked the members to share, how conflicts happened, with whom, and how they managed the conflict. Then some of the group members voiced out how they managed their conflict. Then, one of the group members said, "I don't think that I have any conflict. I value individualistic." And, the rest of the group members just kept quite. ... So, he came into the group just to be the observer, and didn't share anything. He did share on general things, not sharing in deep. (Participant F, 64 – 68, 69 – 78, 80 - 81)

Defensive behaviour can also be observed through member's tendency to be argumentative and reluctant to accept other's opinion. Participant K and E shared their experiences,

Maybe from the gesture. Like when a member gave an opinion and the person who asked for the opinion did not seem to accept it. He kept quiet. Usually, when a person accepts another person's idea, he would nod or respond back. But, for the person who disagreed, he would take some time to think or would frown. He would raise his intonation as if he wanted to argue with the person. "What do you know?" And, sometimes provocation may happen. (Participant K, 103 - 108)

Of course, I know from the behaviour of the members. Maybe they are frowning or he is shaking his head. The tone of voice increased when he is giving his opinion. Or, the way he responds to a question. For example in my group, A will say like "this", but B will say "so what if things happened like this?" Then the

tone of voice will increase and the way the person answered it surprised me. (Participant E, 75 - 79)

Sometimes, body language could be the clue to direct the trainees to focus on certain group members. The member portrayed his rejection to being part of the group dynamics by the way he positioned his leg while sitting. By positioning his legs outside the group circle and refusing to discuss his issue, he was like building a wall around him against the group. L said,

Sometimes, legs also could be the main clue for me. He was sitting in this chair, but his legs were positioned away from the group. It is all about the body language. If his legs moved slightly outside, it means he wanted to run away. He was being quite defensive, meaning he has conflict in the group. He was not dare to share or talk about the issue, because he was having a conflict whether to share or not. If possible, he wanted to shut his mouth and just sat there quietly for the whole session. In the group, we have an understanding that everyone must share and no one can be exempted. (Participant L, 120 - 126)

Another way the members could behave defensively in the group is through showing certain offensive facial expression. Face, being difficult to control, will automatically reflect one's feelings about the environment. Participants A and G recalled the offensive facial expressions the members showed to each other during conflict. Following are some excerpts from participants A and G.

From the members' facial expression. Somehow I could see when we discussed the career development issue, whether parent should decide on their child future career. Then member A said we could not strongly depend on parent and we should have our own idea. I could see another member reacted strongly to the statement. Her face would suddenly give an expression. I asked this member why she gave this type of expression. I could feel something is developing in her heart. (Participant A, 106 - 111)

From the members' body language and facial expression. How they talked to the person and how they expressed their ideas. Their emotions were quite tight and angry. They had fast breathing rate when looking at the person, or they looked

uncomfortable when looking at that person. His facial expression is angry and uncomfortable, like frowning and the mouth ... it's like smiling or laughing at the person's incompetency, and thought what the person said was not good. (Participant G, 92 - 97)

During conflict, facial expressions serve as a valuable indicator to understand who are involved in the conflict and how strongly they feel about the situation. Those who display offensive expressions are usually experiencing some strong negative feelings as well. These feelings like anger make them appear defensive which scares others from getting closer to them.

Reluctant to share

In group counselling, members are highly encouraged to share their concerns with each other. Sharing should be done willingly without force from the counsellor or other members. Members who have volunteered to join the group would usually be ready to discuss their personal issue. So, when some members were reluctant to share, participants B and I knew something was not correct. Participant B noticed that when certain group member was obnoxiously labeled, he would retaliate by refusing to open up and remain quiet throughout the session. Participant B said,

From my experience handling the group, the moment a member is being labeled as stupid the person would keep quite. And, then the members would start to gang up. For those who shared similar thought, they would be in one group. And, they fought against the other group. (Participant B, 117 - 120)

In another scenario, participant I discovered that conflict could cause members to cease doing self-reflection during the session. They retaliated by giving superficial responses which devoid of personal meaning. They talked, as it was required of them, not that they sincerely wanted to. Participant I said,

... they are hardly to open up. They spoke for the sake of answering the counsellors' questions. You asked question and I responded. They did not really reflect on the questions; I didn't feel that. The feeling was just not right. I cannot describe. When I sat down, I just felt something was wrong, but could not identify. (Participant I, 95 - 98)

Readiness to share is important in group counselling. When individuals agree to be members, they accept the responsibility to participate actively. So, when members refuse to open up or when they feel compelled to share, the group is no longer a safe place for members to be themselves. In other words, their reluctance to sincerely share could be the sign of a bigger problem in the group.

Lack of progress

Sometimes when conflict happens, it is not the loud voice or an aggressive behaviours that catches the attention of the trainees. It could be the lack of group development or members' personal growth that warrants attention. Participants B and J shared their experiences encountering the silent call for attention in the group. They said,

... the person would not so called concentrate on the group. He was thinking about himself internally. And, then he showed frowning expression, giving me a hint that he might be experiencing conflict and in need of attention. Something contradicting within himself; the thoughts and feelings were not congruent. When the group proceeded, he was still stuck there. (Participant B, 120 - 123)

Usually I observe the group development. If there was no positive development, I started to think there was something wrong with the group. Or, if a member who seemed to be ok when he first joined the group but after two or three sessions he looked uncomfortable or showed no commitment. He looked bored, or did not want to participate in the group sharing. (Participant J, 116 - 119)

As sessions progress, the group and its members should show positive development by actively working towards their goals. But, when the group seems to be stuck and

members stop showing improvement, the trainees know the group is struggling silently. From their experiences, the trainees learned that conflict could happen overtly with members engaging in forceful and aggressive behaviours, or covertly by hiding their frustration from others.

In conclusion, the counsellor trainees shared their experiences coming face-to-face with conflict in groups they conducted. They associated conflict incidents with certain behaviours of the members. Conflict happens between people who share dissimilar values, ideas, and experiences. Often, conflict occurred when members engaged in defensive behaviours, rejected help, acted disrespectfully, refused to share, and quietly kept their distance from the group.

4.3.2 Research Objective No. 2: to explore the counsellor trainees' conflict management strategies in managing conflict in group counselling.

For the second research objective, the counsellor trainees were asked, "How did you manage conflicts in group counselling?" The question explored the various strategies, including the conflict styles and the group skills the trainees applied to manage conflicts in the group. The data analyzed are divided into three themes, which are: (i) conflict styles, (ii) group skills, and (iii) personal creativity.

Conflict Styles

Each individual has her own unique way of managing conflict in life. The counsellor trainees came to group counselling equipped with certain preferred strategies to manage

conflicts. Two subthemes have been identified which include: (i) avoiding style, and (ii) third party.

Avoiding

Conflict can be unbearable and create uncomfortable feelings in the group. Leaders as well as members usually try to reduce the tension by any means available. The trainees used the avoiding style either to withdraw from discussing an issue, or to smooth down issue that triggered negative emotions.

For participants A and F, they withdrew from talking about the conflict when the energy level was low or when the situation turned emotional. They avoided the conflict for a while to buy time for the group to calm down. Participant A described his experience as following,

If the situation got too emotional, meaning their emotions came out obvious I would stop all discussions. Stopping is like "Ok, everyone silent for a while. 5 seconds." It was not a sudden stop but to let them cool down for a few seconds. If they kept on talking they couldn't see the real content. (Participant A, 196-199)

As for participant F, if she failed then she would let the session continued on its own. During that difficult time, she tried to compose herself.

Since everyone was emotionally down and the conflict was getting serious, I thought the group should stop. Stop the session for the day. If I could not stop the session then I would sit there for a while to cool down myself. (Participant F, 131-133)

For another participant, K, she would withdraw from the discussion and switch to a different topic when the conflict became complex to understand. She refrained from

talking about it, as she did not want to appear in a hurry to find solution to the issue. The strategy made her feel more in control of the situation. By doing that, she had more time to think about the conflict.

If it were too much to handle I would ask the members to stop the conflict. ... I would switch to a different topic. But, before I ended the group I would summarize and ask about the conflict. It all depends on the situation. (Participant K, 181-182, 188-190)

Furthermore, avoiding of a conflict is achieved when total ignorant of it takes place. In the case of participant B, he resorted to taking a short break to escape from dealing with the situation. After everybody has calmed down, he continued with the session as if the friction did not happen.

I stopped the group for 5 minutes. Take a break. ... I went to the toilet and washed my face. I took a deep breath and made myself calm down. And, then I continued like nothing happened. (Participant B, 175, 177-179)

This “subtle” approach to avoiding was also applied by participant D. She ignored dealing with the conflict when she was unable to figure out the solution.

I tried to restructure what I should say to the group. If I could not figure out, I just left it. I ignored it. (Participant D, 159-160)

From the information, it seemed that the trainees chose avoiding style to manage conflict. They did that to have some time to think through their next action and to let the group cool off. Once the emotional state of the group became more harmony, some trainees decided not to entertain the issue and left it as it was. Interestingly, by not dealing with the conflict, they felt empowered and more in control of the group.

Third party

Another subtheme to conflict styles is the use of third party approach to manage the conflict. The third party approach works by asking one of the group members to act as the go-in-between the trainee and the members. Participant C explained the way he used the strategy,

As for the member who did not want to accept me, I tried to send my message to her through a third party. The third party must be one of the group members. If I failed, I accepted that I could not do anything. But, I would look for the positive thing to say. (Participant C, 161-164)

Some trainees relied on the avoiding and the third party approaches to handle conflict in the group. By not directly dealing with it, they discouraged open discussion of the conflict among the members.

Group Skills

Managing challenging situations in group counselling requires the counsellor trainees to be skillful and competent in applying the various group skills needed to conduct effective group work. The utilization of counselling skills to manage conflict is quite popular among the trainees. They shared how the skills were used to manage the conflict.

Attending skills

Majority of the trainees used the attending skills to understand the what, how, and who were involved in the conflict. Participants D, K, E, and C relied on the counselling skills like questioning, clarifying, reflecting, and summarizing to explore and understand conflicts.

Normally I did a lot of summarizing and clarifying "What do you mean by that," or "would you explain more?" From there I asked him or her to do self-reflection. (Participant D, 178-180)

I tried to find out the cause using the exploration skills. I used questioning to let her think about the issue. I looked for the positive and maybe do some reflection to let the members understand her feelings. (Participant C, 177-179)

Attending skills allowed the trainees to get to the source of the conflict. At the same time, the skills made the members felt understood.

Confronting skill

Besides the attending skills, participants B and H relied on the confronting skill to address conflict. Even though the participants used confronting skill in managing conflict, their reasons varied. Participant H used it as a mean to bring the conflict to the conscious level.

I usually confronted them or I made remark so that they became aware of what they were doing. (Participant H, 162-163)

Participant B applied the confronting skill only after he has understood the issue. He tried to be careful and gentle to avoid touching on any sensitive issue underlying the conflict.

First was to explore the conflict through observation, listening, questioning, and then I would confront gently the issue and the underlying issue meaning that the conflict itself could be just superficial. And, the personal experiences could actually be the cause. (Participant B, 195-197)

Both participants, H and B, were careful when applying the confronting skill. They realized if it was used carelessly it could tarnish their image as a responsible and caring leader.

Blocking skill

Another group skill, blocking, was mentioned by participants A, C, G, and F who used it to block counterproductive behaviour from making the conflict worse. The participants used blocking together with other skills to explore and manage the conflict. Participant A used blocking to prevent the group from getting too emotional with the conflict. Once the group calmed down, he used his power to explain and make suggestions to the group.

If the situation got too emotional, meaning their emotions came out obvious I would stop all discussions. Stopping is like "Ok everyone silent for a while. 5 seconds." It was not a sudden stop but to let them cool down for a few seconds. If they kept on talking, they could not see the real content. Maybe they would come out with some harsh words, which were not so appropriate. ... And, then I paraphrased or summarized the session. Then I gave my points from the third person perspective. If the condition allowed I might ask other members to join. If not I straight away showed the blind spot and discussed it. Sometimes I asked the group to reflect on the purpose of the group. "Why are we here? Why am I here?" To let them understand that we grow through our sharing. (Participant A, 196-204)

Participant F used a combination of blocking and empathizing. She gave some time to the member to explain the situation from his perspective. However, once his behaviour turned aggressive she exercised her power to block him from further disrupting the group.

I let the person talk first especially if that person was aggressive type. I listened and tried to understand what was happening to him or her. Then, I voiced out my views or opinion. If it were still out of control, I would pull him outside and talk to him personally. If not, other members would be affected or offended by this group member. ... Then, the rest of the group could come together and discuss. The issue needs to be settled if not it would affect the group members' relationship in the next session. (Participant F, 140-143, 115-116)

Participant C applied blocking as a way to stop further discussion of the issue. He also suggested how the discussion within the group should proceed.

I let the members to overcome the conflict first but if they could not think, I would use my power as a leader to stop the conflict. "Ok, we have to stop discussing about it because in this meeting we still have other thing we need to focus on." ... If I need to make a decision immediately, I would say to the members, "Now I give you around 15 to 20 minutes to discuss and make a decision for the group. If you cannot, we just vote and see. The minority will follow the majority." And, after this if they still could not decide I would use my power as a leader to make the final decision. (Participant C, 167-170, 171-175)

As a whole, the trainees resorted to applying the blocking skill when they wanted to maintain some stability in the group. Blocking prevented the group members from being engulfed with negative emotions and from aggressive behaviour to disrupt the group process. The trainees also used blocking to contain the conflict from getting out of hand, so that the group could achieve a closure before the session ended for the day.

Facilitating skill

Another group skill that is popular among the counsellor trainees is the facilitating. Facilitating is used to initiate and promote communication within the group. Participants A and E used it to promote open interaction among group members and to increase their responsibility towards resolving the conflict. Participant E acted as a facilitator and avoided from taking any sides in the conflict.

Conflict happens due to lack of communication. First, I would facilitate and guide them in asking "What is your feeling towardsss B?" and "What makes you feel so?" and "the reason behind your opinion" and so on. To let them know the reason for their feelings. From here, they would understand each other. I asked the person "After you listened to B, how do you feel?" And, I asked the same question to B. (Participant E, 140-144)

For participant B, he used the facilitating skill to gather information on the conflict. He analyzed the conflict and explored the members' expectations towards him and the group. He then asserted his power to restructure the group to meet the needs of the members.

I collected information from the members to identify aspects of the conflict that were not suitable for them, or whether the way I structured is not preferable to them. So, I checked what their expectation was towards the group and what kind of group they like. I would check on those things before I plan for the next session. Maybe they got bored. Maybe I should shift to another aspect on what work for them rather than what should work for them. (Participant B, 204-210)

Facilitating skill is quite useful when the trainees wanted to encourage participation from group members. Facilitating allows for fairness in sharing where members who were involved could elaborate on their points, and for the observers of the conflict to share their feelings and ideas as well. The information gathered was useful to help the trainees evaluate their performance and group development.

Based on their experience dealing with conflict in group counselling, the trainees were inclined to apply certain group skills. Skills like attending, confronting, blocking, and facilitating were more popularly applied during conflict management. The skills helped members feel understood, promote open communication, and block counterproductive behaviours. Throughout the conflict management process, the trainees were seen to hold on to their status as the leader who would utilize their power when needed.

Personal Creativity

Even though conflict is often viewed negatively, it has the power to stimulate creativity from the parties involved. The counsellor trainees shared some of their creative ideas to

help group members reflect on their roles in the conflict. Two subthemes are identified under the personal creativity: (i) activity and (ii) personality assessment.

Activity

One of the personal creativity is to use activity to divert the members' attention from directly talking about the conflict. Activity helps change the interaction pattern of how members relate to each other and to the conflict itself. To participants K and J, they used activity to help members explore the issue differently. Participant K adopted drawing or writing for members to express their feelings.

It is inappropriate to change the topic because members are angry. Maybe I ask them to express their feelings through drawing. I have to act according to the situation. I want to reduce verbal and physical actions especially among those with conflicts through drawing or writing. (Participant K, 168-171)

Participant J chose activity most relevant to what was happening in the group. The activity indirectly guided the members to understand the situation better. She said,

I like to use activities in groups. If I saw there was communication conflict, I would not discuss with the members of what to do but I would introduce activity related to communication. So, members would do the activity without realizing the activity was to improve their communication skills. (Participant J, 211-214)

The implementation of activity during conflict episodes may help members to increase their self-awareness of not only their feelings but also their thoughts towards the incident. Drawing, for example allows members to express their feelings freely without restriction. Activity functions as the buffer for members to release some pressure due the conflict.

Personality assessment

In addition to the activity, some counsellor trainees believed that conflict could be avoided or reduced if members were aware of each other's personal dispositions. One easy way to do it was through the personality assessment inventory. Participant J usually started her group counselling by exploring the members' personality. She then used the information as a mean for the members to respect and tolerate each other differences. In other words, she tried to convey the message that the reason they perceived situations differently was that they were different and unique in characters build up. She said,

Every time I handle a group, I always discuss about personality so that the members can understand each other. So, when conflict happens I would remind them of their personalities. I want them to be able to tolerate each other differences. But sometimes, there are members who couldn't accept different personality. So, the conflict will continue. (Participant J, 109-113)

Some of the trainees believed that conflict could be dealt with without having members verbally talked about it. Talking may sometimes intensify the already negatively charged climate of the group. Due to that, they introduced drawing, writing, and personality assessment to help with the conflict management process. These indirect approaches to conflict allow members to explore and express themselves freely. The activities created a more relax and nonthreatening situation for the group to work with the conflict.

To conclude the discussion on conflict management strategies, the participants were asked on whether they need training on conflict management. Their responses could be divided into two categories, whereby one group seemed to feel comfortable with their approach to conflict, while the other group believed they need guidance due to either

lacking in knowledge or skills or both. Following are the responses from participants A and B who are confident with their conflict strategies.

If there is a 10-point scale I would rate my self at 7 in managing group conflict. I am still able to work it out through my awareness and analytical thinking of what actually goes wrong. I am able to pull back the string using the basic counseling skills like listening and empathy. (Participant B, 213-216)

I think I can handle conflict because in my mind I think it is normal and I can accept it. So when you can accept it in the first place you will feel comfortable. Sometimes I'm not so clear about the conflicts so I hope I can have a more sharpen mind. Sometimes I'm not fast in sensing it and I need to feel it faster before it turns into a big conflict. (Participant A, 215-219)

As for the trainees who were still looking for more guidance in managing conflict in group counseling, they gave the following responses. Participants D, E, F, H, I, K, and L said,

I won't put myself as very competent in managing conflict in group counseling, due to lack of experience. (Participant E, 146-147)

Not very competent in term of knowledge and skill. (Participant H, 194-194)

I am still weak. I did not know there is certain techniques to handle conflict. As far as I know, if I was fast in taking action, quick in thinking, and creative, then i could solve the conflict. (Participant K, 199-201)

I don't think I am capable of handling conflict. Maybe at the surface only. ... Sometimes I think that my skills are out of place. It's like asking the wrong question. (Participant D, 187-187, 189-189)

Actually I'm not competent enough. ..Yes, I need training. But it is better to ask advice or guidance from the supervisor or lecturer on how to handle the problems. (Participant F, 145-145, 149-151)

Actually I'm not really competent, perhaps 6 from the scale of 1 to 10. Sometimes I myself have conflict and have difficulty in solving those conflicts. ...But, we need to learn to solve in an expert way. (Participant L, 201-202, 207-207)

In terms of skills I really did not have that much. But I really have strong belief that I have to be honest in relating to people. ...Scale is 5 because I lack the knowledge part. (Participant I, 180-181, 184-184)

Majority of the participants conclude their incompetencies are due to the lack of experience in leading groups, inadequate knowledge on conflicts, and lack of awareness of the different strategies to manage conflict.

There are three participants who have mixed feelings about their ability to manage the different types of conflict in the group. Participants C, G, and J have these to say about their competency in managing conflicts.

I think I'm ok. But I still have a lot to learn. (Participant C, 185-185)

For me, I'm still developing. There is different kind of group members, maybe for the students or certain clients I can handle well. But for some personalities like narcissistic, aggressive, who cannot really reflect on themselves, it will be really hard to manage during conflict. I need to learn more skills and techniques, such as when certain situations appear, I should know the best way to handle it. And, how to use conflict to help members gain insight on how they can grow. It's very difficult. (Participant G, 162-167)

It depend on the conflicts....Sometimes I can handle but if I cannot then I will seek guidance from other counselors. When I do that I know I cannot handle the conflict. (Participant J, 217-217, 219-220)

In their attempts to manage conflict, the counsellor trainees relied on various approaches. The popular conflict styles used were the avoiding and the third party. The trainees used the conflict styles to withdraw from the issue, to prevent the group from being too emotional, and to reduce tension. In term of group skills, they relied on attending, confronting, blocking, and facilitating to promote or divert interaction in the group.

Finally, conflict also could be managed through the trainees' personal creativity. Non-verbal approaches like drawing and writing were used to let members express their feelings and thoughts in a nonthreatening way. Some trainees used personality assessments to induce feelings of respect and acceptance of others differences. As a whole, majority of the trainees believe their competency in managing conflicts can be enhanced through more training and knowledge acquisition.

4.3.3 Research Objective No. 3: to explore the counsellor trainees' attitude towards conflicts in group counselling.

In order to explore the counsellor trainees' attitude towards conflict in group counselling, they were asked three questions. The questions were (1) How did you feel when conflict happened in the group?, (2) What were your thoughts about the conflict when it happened in the group?, and (3) What was your reaction towards the conflict when it happened in the group? All the three questions tried to capture the trainees' attitude towards conflict in group counselling. The data analyzed are divided into three themes: (i) affective component, (ii) conflict scripts, and (iii) behavioural component. Under each theme are several more subthemes.

Affective Component

The counsellor trainees shared their emotional reactions to conflict in group counselling. Almost all the emotions experienced were negative. The trainees described the emotions and elaborated on the effects of negative emotions on their actions. Three subthemes are

observed under the affective component: (i) negative emotions, (ii) overt expressions, and (iii) physiological changes.

Negative emotions

Conflict creates feelings of uneasiness and stress in people. Conflict makes people feel sad, angry, disappointed, and confused. During that vulnerable emotional state, conflict causes a person to become aggressive or to find fault with others. Most of the participants, A, D, E, H, K, and L were aware of the different emotions they felt during conflicts. The feelings were reactions towards (i) plan not going smoothly, (ii) failure to identify critical incident when it happened, (iii) the person who started the conflict, and iv) the uncertainty of conflicts. Following are the excerpts from the participants.

Felt sad because everything was not going smoothly. (Participant L, 163)

I felt uncomfortable and uneasy. I felt panic. (Participant E, 94,118)

I got anxious. Let say the verbal exchange between members were not in good term then I would start to feel anxious and afraid. If the conflict happened in front of my eyes I could not control. I was afraid if it continued outside the group and it was no longer under my control, then I would feel anxious. (Participant K, 129-132)

I felt a little bit of anxiety because it didn't happen like in my idea. A little bit tense and stress. (Participant A, 124-125)

Sad. I was not angry but I felt sad. If I could not do anything about it, then I would be disappointed. I worried about how to change that behaviour. If I cannot solve it, then I become angry. (Participant H, 152-154)

Fear and resentment towards the person that I was having the conflict with. I felt unhappy and very troubled because I kept thinking of what happened in the group. (Participant D, 148-149)

The prevalent emotions among the trainees were anger, sadness, and anxiety. To capture how a range of emotions could unravel within a person during a single conflict incident, participant F relayed her experience. She said,

In conflict situation, I would not feel happy. I felt sad and nervous because I did not know how to handle it at the time. Embarrassed, because all the members kept quiet. I would keep looking at them. I tried to cool down. I did not feel comfortable. The situation was very uncomfortable. Nobody wanted to voice out. (Participant F, 118-121)

On the other hand, participant G felt a mixture of negative and positive emotions. He was happy because conflict signified that the group was not stuck. But, he was uncertain of how to effectively apply the incident for group growth. Given that, he would let the group find its way out of the stressful situation. Thus, he left the group to decide on their cause of actions.

Anxious, confused and happy. It's like a confusion of whether I should be happy or not. ... I felt like "Ah, it's time for a change." Some part of me wanted the group to grow. But, sometimes I can't really utilize the feelings that I get. (Participant G, 148-149, 104-105)

Based on the sharing, it can be concluded that majority of the trainees experienced more negative compared to positive emotions. These negative emotions seemed to get worse with time. Often, the initial feeling was sadness to see conflict happen, but as time passed by this feeling changed to anxiety or anger.

Overt expressions

During that vulnerable emotional state, the trainees were not only aware of the different emotions but also of the body automatic reaction to negative emotions. Several trainees

revealed they could not conceal the negative emotions. Thus, some would play with their hands, frown, start blaming others, or become quiet.

Participants D, I, and L could feel their body tensed up to mimic the emotions they felt. Participant D played with her pen, participant I portrayed defensive body posture, and participant L changed her sitting position. All these responses reflected their uncomfortable state of being. A statement by participant L conveyed how her emotion made her more cautious.

Usually I felt tense. The way I sat would be different. Before my negative emotion came in, I would sit in a comfortable way. But, when I realized something was wrong, I became tense up and sat straight. I mean it is a signal for me to be alert. And, I started to think "How can I solve this problem?" (Participant L, 174-177)

Face is one of the revealing parts of the body. One's feelings can easily be noticed through facial expressions. Participants E, D, and I realized they frowned and smiled less during a stressful situation. Participant I tried to refrain from smiling. To her, if she smiled during conflict she might be sending the wrong message to the group. Others would interpret her smiling face as if she was not serious or she was being cynical.

I felt tensed. Tensed facial expression and I smiled less. In normal situation, I often smile but in tensed situation, I really could not smile. If I smiled people would think I did not take it seriously, or they thought I took it as a joke. I also felt muscle tension especially around the shoulder. (Participant I, 158-161)

Another overt expression is verbal exchange. Making a verbal statement during unstable emotional experience could be challenging. The trainees stressed they have to be sensitive with their intonation and choice of words when expressing themselves. Because of that, participants C and D refrained from saying anything. They preferred to keep quiet and at the same time continue to observe the group.

.... when emotion came, the word I used would be full of emotions. And, the emotions didn't give any positive effect to the individual or to the group. When I am emotional, I would not talk because the more I talk the more mistakes I make. ... I just kept quiet, listen, and observed the group. (Participant C, 141-143, 132)

The trainees admitted that it was quite challenge to hide their negative feelings. Engaging in conversation with other members while they were sad, angry, or anxious might result in some misunderstanding. Thus, they transformed the negative energy from the emotions to different body parts like sitting straight, taking with strained voice, and controlled facial expressions.

Physiological changes

To some counsellor trainees their emotional reactions were more discreet. They could feel their body react internally under pressure. Participants A, B, and J experienced an increase in the heartbeat during conflict. Participant J said,

My heartbeats became faster. My voice would change. But, if the conflict continued, it would affect my physical. I would start to feel tired. (Participant J, 192-193)

Besides an increase in the heart rate, another common reaction to conflict is the change in bodily sensation. Body sensation refers to one's awareness of stress through the senses or internal body organs. To some participants these physiological changes affected some organs or parts of the body. Participant H felt her stomach tighten, whereas participants K and E started to sweat, while participant D experienced muscle tension around her shoulder.

I did feel there's a butterfly in my stomach when I said "You are fierce". Usually my stomach felt tighten. But, I tried to smile when I did that. Maybe it's wrong.

But, I just didn't know how to say it nicely. ... Sometimes I get tensed when I didn't know what to do. (Participant H, 153-155, 157-158)

Sweat. I would sweat. My temperature would increase. Suddenly I feel my body is hot. It's not because I'm angry with the member, but that's how I react when I'm not comfortable. I would sweat and feel dizzy. (Participant K, 173-175)

Muscle tension around the shoulder and legs. (Participant D, 164)

Participant G's statement could best summarize how his body reacted to the pressure. His body parts tightened and sweaty. His heartbeat increased. And, he felt the urge to push his legs to the floor to release the tension.

I could feel my shoulders and sometimes my legs and my hands become tight. These are the few parts that I felt quite tight when I was anxious. And, sometimes sweating on my head and breathing rate increased. Sometimes, I really need to step on the floor like really pushing and pressing my feet to the floor. (Participant G, 135-138)

For some trainees, having to deal with conflict caused physiological stress in them. They became conscious of the increasing heartbeat, raising body temperature, and muscle tension. As a result, they became strained to the point of starting to feel dizzy and emotionally tired to deal with the conflict.

In short, conflict created negative feelings and placed the counsellor trainees in a vulnerable emotional state. To many of them, the prominent feelings included sadness, anger, and anxiety. Several trainees experienced more than one feeling at a time. Experiencing several feelings simultaneously could be overwhelming and confusing. In some situations, the feelings intensified as time went by, in particular when the conflict has not been successfully resolved.

Furthermore, when they were emotionally unstable, the trainees became alert of their body reactions to pressure. Closed or defensive body posture, frowning, verbal expression or lack of it, and physiological changes were among the common reactions experienced by them. Most of the time, they could control these reactions from being so apparent to the group. These overt and covert reactions to conflict alerted the trainees that they were emotionally and physiologically under stress and needed immediate relief to feel in balance again.

Conflict Scripts

In addition to the negative emotions, the counsellor trainees also experienced some cognitive discomforts. They believed conflict carried more negative than positive energy. There are three subthemes under the conflict scripts: (i) conflict as resistance, (ii) conflict as weakness, and (iii) conflict as failure.

Conflict as resistance

The counsellor trainees perceived conflict as a form of resistance. Resistance refers to the inability of counsellor trainees to accept that conflict could happen in the group, and the unwillingness to think of conflict as a normal process in group relationships. Participants A and E, were surprised when conflict actually manifested itself in their groups. Conflict tarnished the perfectionist picture they had of a successful group. They assumed that good group should be without conflict, or satisfied members would not create conflict.

For me, I know that it is normal to have conflict in a group. But, in a real situation actually I kind of see thing to perfection. I always have the idea the group should be without conflict. Somehow when the group deviate from my idea

it creates some conflict in me. I kind of think why it happened like this. (Participant A, 120-123)

I was like "Oh no, what happened? Why did conflict happen in the group?" That was my first reaction. Everything was going smoothly, thus I did not expect to have any conflict in the group. (Participant E, 91-93)

The group situation became quite tense during conflict. There were mixed reactions in the group. According to participant K, the conflict turned unbearable when criticism dominated the communication mode in the group. She said,

During conflict, the situation is quite stressful. At first it is filled with negative feelings and then positive. Not everybody can accept criticism. (Participant K, 121-123)

Conflict is resisted because it posts a challenge to the group progress. Participants L and C perceived the conflict as an obstacle to the group growth. They said,

It is an obstacle in the group counselling. ... The conflict towards the group members or to the group leaders can be discouraging. (Participant L, 128, 154)

For me, the conflict is very hard to handle and need be solved first before the group can move to another stage. (Participant C, 156-158)

Misjudging others intention and personality during conflict was quite common among the participants G, B, and A. The emotions blurred their wise judgment, and prevented them from being attentive to the situation. The perceptual prejudice they had towards certain group members interfered with their intention to remain neutral.

Sometimes it made me misjudged people while anxious. Anxiety made me want to solve the conflict fast, but sometimes the timing was not there yet. I was like moving too fast to solve the conflict. But, the emotion couldn't really make me figure out the details of the conflict, so it was some sort like conflicting. (Participant G, 140-143)

During that moment, I said to myself "I will be irrational if I keep thinking about the issue. I will be irrational if I don't get rid of this emotion." I was aware of

this, that's why I asked for the break. During conflict, my mind would be irrational; a lot of judgments would come to my mind "this person did not open enough". This would stop the flow of communication." (Participant B, 186-190)

When I was emotionally not stable it would block me from looking at the problem or conflict in a rational way. When I was angry or having just a little anger at myself, and then a group member said something, I would quickly become prejudice. Then I would not really hear the content. This might prevent me from being really rational to see, hear what he or she said. (Participant A, 190-194)

Even though some trainees accepted conflict as normal, they still perceived it as an obstacle. To them, satisfied members should not be engaged in conflict. Or, happy members should not get involved in frictions. It is stressful to be caught in conflict because one characteristic of conflict is people cease being nice to each other. People tend to be sarcastic and prefer to criticize others. So, the trainees believed that before the group could progress to the next stage, conflict has to be resolved.

Conflict as weakness

When faced with conflict, one usually resorts to either find fault with others or point finger to oneself. Some participants looked at conflict as reflecting their weakness or their lack of competency as counsellors. These negative evaluation of the leader's role were shared by participants A, K, E, G, B, and H. Participants A, K, and B said,

I feel afraid and anxious. I'm afraid if I cannot solve the conflict and have to end the session, the conflict may rise again in the next session. I'm afraid if member decides not to come. I'm afraid of members' perception towards me, "Ah, the leader doesn't know how to settle the conflict." Members start to dislike each other, hate the bad situation created by the conflict, and feel disappointed with the leader for failing to play her role. Conflict makes me feel like I fail as a group leader. Conflict should be solved. (Participant K, 154-159)

If I failed to handle them, I would doubt whether I'm doing the right thing or whether I guide the group in a wrong way or is there something that I need to be

sensitive to, especially if the issue involves a cultural element. Sometimes the conflict is not between the group members but between the co-leaders, and the members enjoy watching the leaders. (Participant B, 154-157)

Conflict affects the confidence of members towards the leader. When conflict happens the members look at how the leader will solve this conflict. It is because the leader is the one who is responsible to guide the group. Another thing is when conflict happens between the group leader and the members it will affect their relationship and rapport. The relationship will turn bad because of this. (Participant A, 154-158)

Counsellor trainees saw conflict in group counselling as threatening. Conflict posed an internal threat to their self-image as a competent leader. The trainees were afraid the members would lose confidence in them to lead the group effectively. Conflict is a test of the leader's competency.

I could feel the shock. Sometimes I worried and scared, "How am I going to handle this kind of situation?" The conflict was a big obstacle in the group. I was afraid that the conflict would lead to negative consequences and I could not move the group to the higher and deeper stage. ... I saw the conflict in a pessimistic way. I would not grow together with the conflict. (Participant L, 130-133, 180-181)

Overall, the trainees felt vulnerable during conflict. They thought of all the negative consequences that could possibly happen to the group and to the relationship between them and the members because of their incompetency as leaders. Conflicts exposed their shortcomings to the group, in particular their inability to handle conflicts.

Conflict as failure

During conflicts, the trainees became cognitively engaged. They critically analyzed their roles in the group. They strongly believed they had failed when they could not resolve the conflict. When this thought conquered her mind, participant J experienced low self-

confident that interfered with her ability to communicate her thoughts fluently. Even though the conflict happened briefly, she believed it had tarnished her image as a leader.

When I was not confident or worry, ... my communication and self-confident would be disturbed. But, it happened for awhile only. I worried that members would say "She is not confident." That perception would disturb my role as a leader. (Participant J, 206-209)

Other participants, K and E admitted that when under pressure they could not think constructively. Even though she focused hard on solving the conflict, participant K was in shock to see conflict unfold in front of her eyes.

I became stressful because conflict made me feel like I failed as a group leader. If the conflict is clear, it is easier for me to handle. But, if the conflict is difficult to understand then I would start asking myself "Did I say something wrong?" or "Did I do something wrong?" "Did I facilitate wrongly?" All these questions kept playing in my mind. ...During the time, I could not think properly. When I am in fear and stress, I cannot think rationally. I could not plan or settle the conflict. I worried the session would get stuck. I was shocked to see the members and did not know how to react. (Participant K, 125-128, 176-178)

Feeling of confusion can put a person in a state of not knowing how to comprehend what is happening. To participant I, she initially blamed the person who started the conflict but then shifted the blame to her inability to be more receptive towards the situation.

The feeling is disappointed. Angry, I think. Sad, because I blamed the member for the conflict. I see it like this, "you are the one who wanted to improve yourself, and when this happened you could not accept and blame other people." I was sad because of myself. I have to learn to open up and accept the conflict. (Participant I, 144-147)

Even though the trainee blamed herself and felt responsible for the conflict, it is quite courageous to point finger to oneself. It takes a lot of will to admit one's vulnerability. This personal struggle was reflected in the statement made by participant I.

Pressured because the leader needs to fix up the conflict. "What's wrong with me," I pointed to myself first. So, somehow I felt pressured. Pressure to see the weakness in myself. It needs a lot of courage to face that. (Participant I, 134-136)

The trainees developed a belief that they failed as a leader and as a person when they could not perform their roles as expected. They started to question themselves for the possible mistakes they had done. This thought that they had failed caused a dilemma within them.

Conflict is growth

Besides the negative thoughts towards conflict, some trainees acknowledged its productive side. Conflict provides a rewarding experience for it to be ignored. Participants A, C, and I were convinced that conflict is useful for the development of a mature and strong relationship. Participants A and I said,

It is very normal. I think it is one of the paths that you must overcome before you move to another stage. (Participant A, 96-97)

Conflict involves utilizing human power in order for us to grow and to solve our issues. (Participant I, 184-185)

Since conflict is part of a maturation process, it should be welcomed with open heart and mind. Conflict promotes personal growth in term of exposure to new experience and acquisition of new skills for the whole group. Both parties, as pointed by participants B, G, and L could learn from each other on how to handle conflicts in relationships. According to them, conflict should be resolved in the open where everybody could share their perspectives. By personally engaged in the process, members learned that conflict could be managed and sometimes resolved. And, through the process they learned about their personal contributions in initiating conflict in groups. Participants B and L said,

For group counselling, I think conflict is positive. If there is an interpersonal conflict, it is better to put it in front of the group and solve it. I take it as a form of growth. Sometimes I asked the client to think and explore what actually make him get into conflict. ... conflict ... creates an opportunity for group members to pour out their mind and thinking. (Participant B, 164-166, 202-203)

Conflict can make them grow and become a better person. Conflict is not exclusive to the group. Everyone will have conflict with each other. Sometimes, one or two individuals will have conflict between themselves. Other people can learn from this conflict. They can learn how to solve it. (Participant L, 135-138)

Apart from asking group members to self-reflect, participant K said conflict gave her insight and increased her self-awareness about her own attitude. She said,

Conflict is good if it develops properly. Sometimes I gain new insight through conflict. When there is self-awareness, I start to do a self-evaluation. "May be what she says is correct." I think conflict brings positive effect. (Participant K, 118-121)

Contrary to the belief that conflict destroyed relationships, participant J believed that conflicts could heal relationships. Through conflicts, two individuals with different views learned to respect one another and learned to listen emphatically to others'.

Conflict brings awareness for members to think and be more positive. Sometimes, conflict can heal a relationship. For example, two members have disagreements in the group. They could not accept each other ideas. It is not that they could not accept each other ideas but they were trying hard to defend their ideas. That is how conflict happens. But, when the leader intervened it could make them be more open minded and share positive ideas. If the leader did not intervene then they might probably continue to defend their own ideas. (Participant J, 128-137)

Furthermore, participants J and K elaborated on the professional benefits they gained from their encounter with conflict in counseling group. Having to deal with conflict forced them to read more and consult those with more experience.

To me when conflict happens my skills will get better. I can improve my skills on how to handle conflict. Another thing, if the conflict is about something I have never handled before I would go back and read more. So, my knowledge also

increases. In terms of personal growth, I learn about how to communicate with different kind of people. Because in counselling, communication is important (Participant J, 145-150)

Gain experience and skills to handle conflict. Improve my knowledge because when there is conflict in the group I tend to spend more time reading or consult others on how to solve the conflict. Without experiencing conflict in the group, I may not know what to do. (Participant K, 138-141)

Conflict, as a group process, is embedded with positive energy. By letting oneself stay with the conflict, the trainees together with the group members, started to utilize their resources to manage the conflict. Through the process, they gained insight, self-awareness, and built stronger relationship with each other. The trainees observed that conflict actually improved the group dynamics and their leadership competency. Conflict motivated the group to change for the better.

In short, the cognitive evaluation of conflicts and their consequences on the group forced some counsellor trainees to develop negative attitude towards conflict. To them, conflict was usually counterproductive for the group growth and should be avoided before it destroyed good things around it. Conflict created confusion within them, leaving them wondering whether they have done something to provoke it. Due to that, they resisted conflict as it made them look weak and defeated in front of others. On the other hand, some trainees associated conflict with having a growth factor. To them, conflict forced them and the group to utilize their resources to work through the situation. And that, conflict could actually strengthen relationship and their competency.

Behaviour Component

Another component of attitudes is behaviour. Behaviour refers to the tendency or disposition of the counsellor trainees to act in certain way when in conflict. This section explores the counsellor trainees' reactions during conflicts. Five subthemes have been identified which include: (i) stop it, (ii) ignore it, (iii) become quiet, (iv) turn aggressive, and (v) analyze it.

Stop it

During conflict episodes, the counsellor trainees observed that the members were emotionally affected. Some members were rather active in expressing their emotions but some became emotionally withdrawn. With so much emotions unveiling in the group, participants A, F, and C believed it was more relevant to stop the group from further discussing the conflict. Participants A and F said,

Stopping. If the situation got too emotional, meaning their emotions came out obvious I would stop all discussions. (Participant A, 196-197)

Since everyone was emotionally down and the conflict was getting serious, I thought the group should stop. Stop the session for the day. (Participant F, 131-132)

In other words, the trainees would stop the session when the discussion turned emotional. Conflict would be best dealt with when members were calm. Thus, stopping the group gave time for members to regain their composure.

Ignore it

Another way of responding to conflict is to ignore it or to pretend it did not happen. Participants B, D, J, and L turned a blind eye on the conflict because it made them not confident and emotional. Following are some excerpts from participants B, D, and L.

I stopped the group for 5 minutes. Take a break. ...And, then I continued like nothing happened. (Participant B, 175, 177-179)

I tried to restructure what I should say to the group. If I could not figure out I just left it. I ignored it. (Participant D, 159-160)

I saw the conflict in a pessimistic way. ...And, the conflict would never be brought up for discussion in the group because I have no confidence to solve it. (Participant L, 180-182)

By ignoring its existence, the trainees hoped the conflict would go away and not disrupt the group process any more.

Become quiet

Conflicts have the potential to make the trainees feel stuck, and not knowing how to respond appropriately to the situation. When too much emotion rushed in at the same time, participants K, D, H, and I became paralyzed. Participant D confessed that when she was emotionally loaded, she would turn into herself and remain quiet. She said,

All the emotions coming in at the same time would be very hard for me to focus on what to write. ... I felt myself stuck. ... I would be less focus on the group. I focused more on my own thoughts and my emotions only. I could not respond to the group members. I would be quiet. (Participant D, 168-169, 170, 172-173)

Participants H and K agreed that once their plans for the group were hampered, they would be at loss. Participant H became forgetful having to entertain the unexpected occurrence, while participant K was so shocked to respond. They said,

During the time I couldn't think properly. When I am in fear and stress, I cannot think rationally.... I was shocked to see the members and did not know how to react. (Participant K, 177-178, 179-180)

... if I could not handle my emotions everything would go haywire. ... I forgot what to do next. So, I just concentrated for a while on that and went with the flow. I mean I just did what I thought I should do. Did not follow any plan anymore. (Participant H, 181-182, 183-185)

The trainees recalled feeling a rush of negative emotions within them during conflicts. These emotions made them forgetful, turned into themselves for safety, and experienced moments of psychological shut down. Thus, could not plan for their next action.

Turn aggressive

Sometimes when under a stressful circumstance, counsellor trainees might resort to slightly aggressive behaviour. In order to be in control of the situation, they may act harshly towards some group members. Participants E, H, and I shared their experience having had to act aggressively during conflicts. Participant E feared he might say something regretful to the members or attack them, while H more became interrogative. The following are excerpts from them.

For me, if I kept on thinking about how to deal with the conflict, I would not be able to focus on my role as a group counsellor. Let say, if I were angry or frustrated or disappointed, I might say things I would regret or maybe attack the members. (Participant E, 136-138)

I did not like it at all and I tried to handle it not harshly. I said, "Why.. why why are you doing this? Why did you grab her things and do that? Can you tell me?" (Participant H, 145-146)

At first, I'd tense up because I resisted. I blamed the members for the conflict. When I realized my resistance, I changed my mind to accept it. (Participant I, 109 - 110)

When under pressure some counsellor trainees turned aggressive in their choice of words and actions. It was their way of saying that they were serious and the group was important to them.

Analyze it

To certain trainees, the best way to settle the conflict was to focus on the problem instead of the emotions. To avoid oneself from being too involved with the members' strong emotions, participant G changed his mode of approach. He became more problem-focused.

Sometimes, the anxiety made me want to change from the person focused to problem focused. (Participant G, 155-156)

By using problem oriented approach, participant G tried to impose some structure on the group to be more rational when they discussed the conflict.

The counsellor trainees shared how they behaved towards conflict in the group. The negative emotions caused them to either stop further discussion on the conflict, to ignore it, to be quiet, to act aggressive, or to analyze the issue. They acted that ways to control

their own emotions as well as the members'. They hoped to contain the conflict from getting worse.

Based on the sharing, it could be concluded that majority of the trainees had developed negative attitude towards conflict in group counselling. They experienced many negative feelings like anger, sadness, disappointment, fear, and anxiety during conflicts. In terms of cognition, the trainees had developed conflict scripts to associate with the aversive episode. To them, the conflict was counterproductive for the group progress. Conflict brought more negative consequences to the group dynamics and to their image as group counsellors. Conflict exposed their weaknesses as counsellors and made them look incompetent in front of the group. To stop further damage to their self-image, the trainees chose to stop, ignore, become silent, or act aggressive during conflicts.

4.3.4 Research Objective No. 4: to explore the counsellor trainees' perceptions of group leadership functions during conflict in group counselling.

Twelve counsellor trainees were interviewed to find out their perception of group leadership functions during conflict in group counselling. They answered three questions pertaining to the topic. The questions included (1) How do the counsellor trainees' define group leadership functions in group counselling?, (2) What is the trainees' perception of their roles in group counselling, and (3) What are their leadership functions during the conflict in group counselling? These questions tried to understand the trainees view of

what constitutes leadership in group counselling and their perceptions of the roles they are supposed to play during the conflict.

Group Leadership

In helping the trainees explore the question, they were encouraged to view the concept of leadership from their experience being a member or a leader in group counselling, from readings, and from discussions they had with friends or lecturers. Two subthemes have been identified from the interview: (i) leadership skills and (ii) personal dispositions.

Leadership skills

Majority of the participants perceived leadership in group counselling as having a leader who is able to guide, direct, facilitate, and control the interaction between members in the group. Participants C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, and K described the dynamics of leadership functions in group counselling. Participant L believed that a leader is responsible for the running of the group. Participant L said,

In my opinion, leadership is a person who leads a group. And, the group is being controlled by the leader, in the positive way. And, some leadership skill is inserted into the group. The leader plays a very fundamental role in group counselling. (Participant L, 2-4)

As a group leader, he was supposed to guide the group towards its goals, to facilitate interaction, to provide group structure, to work on issues, and to stimulate change in members.

Leadership in group counselling refers to the leader who guides the group from beginning to its ending. And, how to handle group dynamics from negative to positive. (Participant J, 2 -4)

I think leadership is like mentoring, facilitating the group members. The leaders need to explain what their roles are in the group, and group norms. The group leader must lead well, facilitate and mentoring. ... Leaders' role is to make sure that they (the members) have clear direction, so they will not go out of their discussion. Leaders must always have a sense of how to care and concern for group members. (Participant F, 2-4, 10-12)

A group leader should be the one who guides the members to work on their issues. For example, the group plans to talk about self-confidence, then the leader will initiate the discussion and guide the group to focus on self-confidence issues (Participant D, 3-6)

Leadership is how a leader leads the groups to reach the group goals and for members to have insight to change. (Participant G, 2-3)

A leader could also be described from the way he practiced his power in the group. The trainees reflected on their power in term of how much influence they exerted over the decision made in the group. A leader should also be able to encourage group members to see beyond their personal differences so that they could establish a working alliance within the group. Participant B said,

In group, the leadership is about decision making, how to guide the group, to achieve what the group wants. It shares the similarities with the public concept of leadership. Leadership in group counselling requires the leader to entertain individual differences and how to guide these differences into a consensus that works for the group. (Participant B, 3-6)

Furthermore, participants E and I noticed that the power of a leader would slowly diminish and be replaced by the power within the group. At the beginning, the leader exerted more power especially in providing guidance and direction for the group. However, as members gained confident and understood their roles, they became more active in deciding on the themes and the flow of the group discussion. The leaders would monitor and intervene when necessary. Participant I shared her observation of how a

leader direct control over the group was replaced with more 'friendly' role as time passed by. She said,

The leader leads a group. She is the one who recruits and chooses members, and then leads the members. In the beginning, he will lead and give instruction more often and, the members follow. After several sessions, the leading became lesser, and it is more about facilitating. That means the members and the leader can shape the power of leadership in the group. (Participant I, 2-5)

Finally, as a leader who was equipped with the required skills, he or she was held responsible for the group success. Participant H said,

For me leadership is like being able to control the group session well. And having all the skills required to make sure that the session is successful. Be able to control conflict and be able to use all the counselling skills especially the communication skill. (Participant H, 2-4)

Taken together, the trainees perceptions of leadership in group counselling was of someone who could provide structure, direct, facilitate, and guide group members to achieve their goals and work together despite their differences.

Personal disposition

Another dimension of leadership is the character of the leader. Participants A and H acknowledged the importance of personal characteristics of a leader. Participant A stressed that a leader should be knowledgeable and possess positive energy to make members feel welcomed and accepted. Participant H said that a leader with the right attitude towards people might encourage members to look beyond their limitations.

A leader should be knowledgeable. ... One of the things a leader should do when leading a group is to portray positive energy. He should be positive. He can have an image that makes the members feel welcomed and comfortable when they are in the group. (Participant A, 2, 63-65)

Maybe understanding people, I think I would be good at that. And, my attitude towards people. I am positive and I do not judge people. So, maybe that helps me as well. Even though I am not good at my communication, having this kind of attitude helps me. (Participant H, 41-44)

A counsellor should be someone who not only feels good being who he or she was but also accepted others as they were. The trainees should be knowledgeable to understand the group dynamics. And, possessing the right attitude towards others helps them be more responsible with their words and actions when they were with the group.

In short, the concept of leadership in group counselling is quite challenging to be defined. The trainees observed group leadership as encompassing more of leadership skills than of personal character. A leader was expected to recruit new members, lead, and facilitate them to another level of self-awareness. She exerted power over the group when deemed necessary. As a whole, leadership is about the ability of the leader to perform leadership skills, to be knowledgeable, and to have positive attitude towards others.

Leadership Roles

The way the trainees perceive their leadership roles in the group would be influenced by their definitions of leadership. The trainees' perceptions of counsellor roles could be organized into three subthemes: (i) as a leader, (ii) as a catalyst, and (iii) as a participator.

Two trainees, I and L, hesitated on choosing the appropriate word to address themselves in the group. Both words, a leader and a counsellor, evoked different feelings within them. They said,

... somehow "lead" give me pressure, which means I need to know everything. It requires me to know more, and be an expert to the members. So, somehow it

creates pressure on me like I am a higher authority figure in the group. If the whole process seems to be like that, then I am not comfortable. When they shared, I liked to pick up some important themes and asked question about the themes. So, that it raised their awareness about what they were talking about. (Participant I, 10-16)

I actually like the word "leader", rather than "counsellor", because "counsellor" seems a little bit serious and somewhat not comfortable with the group members. If you used "leader", they said, "Ok, you are the leader. So, you are the one who leads the group. You are the one who gives instruction to the group. So, we'll just follow your instruction." Perhaps the leader can be an educator in the group but it depends on the roles of group members. If they need to achieve some self-growth, I can provide them with some opinions or articles for them to refer to. (Participant L, 7-13)

As leader

In describing their roles as group counsellors, the trainees analyzed the many responsibilities they need to perform. As leaders, they have to be able to perform as many roles as possible. One prevalent role was being the facilitator in the group. Participants K, E, H, and J said they preferred the facilitator role to other roles. In their descriptions, they also mentioned other responsibilities they needed to fulfill. To facilitate means they also have to listen, guide, give advice, and stimulate discussion.

I prefer to play the facilitator role. I do not like to play the teacher or the coach role. I like to facilitate, and at the same time, control members' behaviour in term of their interpersonal communication. I like the group to move on its own and if there is something I need to intervene I would do. As a whole, I prefer members to interact with each other. If there were a need for me to give advice, I would do so. I also like to share my experience with them. But, I prefer to listen than to talk. ... I like to listen to others' ideas and experiences. I let the members make decisions for themselves. If they do not have an alternative then I would help them. If I see members agree on the issue then I would let the group continue. If not I would discuss with them. ... I also use many group activities to make members

understand each other. I usually would decide whether the activity is suitable or not. I only choose an activity with a clear objective. I prefer to use activity in a group than to focus on discussion only. (Participant J, 6-14, 71-75, 76-79).

As a group leader, my role is as a facilitator because I did not provide any direct intervention. I did not ask the members to follow what I said. I need to facilitate them to develop and get ideas from the discussion done in the group. (Participant K, 8-11)

Most of the time, I act as a facilitator in the group. I facilitate them to discuss about an issue. And, I let them talk and share their experiences or opinions about an issue. Sometimes when the situation became very silent, I tried to get the energy back into the group. I gave them some questions or shared my personal experience related to the issue. I tried to observe all of the members. Let say, if most of the members were quiet and seemed not very interested in the topic, I asked them "Is there anything that made you not comfortable with the issue?" I would try to focus on them instead of the issue. (Participant E, 11-17)

Since the roles of a leader were quite dynamic and changed with the group demands, participants C, G, and B provided a more holistic picture of leadership by mentioning other more challenging responsibilities group leaders. They said,

As a group counsellor, as an educator, and information giver when it is necessary. As a leader, a skill trainer to train the members with specific skills to cope with an issue, and as an encourager for the group to grow. (Participant B, 8-10)

As a leader, a counsellor, a listener, a motivator, and a problem solver. And, some sort like to do the assessment on their thinking, behaviour and psychological states. It is how to help the client proceed, to become a better person. ... I might plan for the directions of the group based on the group goals, but I will try to adjust from their perspective whether the direction is correct or not. I will try to examine the group goals and the expectations of members. I will try to help the members to support each other. And, I try to make them work as a group, instead of individuals. And, search for their resistance, whether they are "ok" with the group goals or not. I will identify the strengths of the members, and compliment them. Sometimes, I will use some activities, but it depends on the characteristics, readiness, and openness of the groups. ... to help members to support each other, and to move towards their goals. (Participant G, 5-7, 60-68)

The trainees perceived their roles as well rounded. They have to be a good listener, advisor, facilitator, educator, motivator, skill trainer, an expert, and problem solver. All these different roles demanded that they be well trained before taking up the leadership role in group counselling.

As catalyst

Group counselling should be a safe setting for members to try new ways of behaving. It is the leader's responsibility to transform the group into a trusting environment. Participant A observed the group as a "platform" for members to grow. Playing the role of a catalyst, he motivated and encouraged them to learn from each other.

I see myself as something like a catalyst or a bridge that links between members. ... Also, I give some motivation and encourage members to speak more. Sometimes, they are not confident about what they want to say, so I provide them a platform to share. (Participant A, 6, 12-14)

Furthermore, participants B, C, E, F, and G saw that as a catalyst they also acted as an agent of change. They stimulated the members' internal drive to be more receptive towards change, to be more responsible, and to be in control of their life.

When I lead a group I want to make sure that the whole group becomes more able to manage themselves as well as to change their locus of control from focusing on the external factors to be more internalized, meaning they do not point to the issue outside themselves but rather learn to take responsibility for their own actions. (Participant B, 28-32)

From what I understand, group counselling is different from other types of group. It focuses more on members' self-awareness; and, I want members to face themselves. What I mean is, I want them to understand themselves deeper and confront the side they do not want to see, the dark side. I want to help them be congruent. (Participant C, 16-20)

I really want to help the group members. I want to make sure they learn something for themselves. I want to see the changes in their lives from the beginning until the end of the session. But, it is not easy to do. I will do my part and help them to go deeper and deeper, session by session. (Participant F, 20-23)

As mentioned by participant F, being a catalyst in the group was demanding. The trainee hoped by being supportive, he could help members gather the strength to do a deeper exploration of their life.

On the other hand, sometimes leaders need to be a bit more direct with their feedbacks. By sharing the group members his thoughts of them, participant C wished to increase their self-awareness and motivation to improve themselves.

When I was the leader, I have been more directives. But, I tried to understand the group members because after following the counselling class I learned to empathize and not to blame others without asking the person. Now I ask and after that, I will complain and criticize. I will criticize, not because I want to blame them but to let them know and to help them increase self-awareness, to know their weaknesses and to move forward and be better in the future. (Participant C, 46-51)

As a catalyst to change, the trainees knew they need to prepare the group environment to be therapeutic for learning to take place. Once the appropriate context is established, they could stimulate members to try new behaviour, explore their weaknesses, and achieve congruency between the internal and the external selves.

As participator

Sometimes, being someone of authority can be a hindrance for leaders to connect with group members. For participants D and I, they preferred to be a participator or as one of

the members. By doing that, they wished to gain better understanding of the members' world and their problems.

When I'm there in the counselling session, it will be just me the normal person, not as a counsellor. I'm more like a peer with the group, trying to gain common understanding of their situation. (Participant D, 38-40)

By being a participator who interacted at the same level with the group members, the trainees developed better awareness of the group dynamics. Participants A, K, D, I, L, and J deliberated on how groups contributed to their personal growth as a counsellor. Participants A and I viewed their experience as something special and self-revealing. Participant A was surprised to find out that he and the members shared some similarities in the way they think and feel, regardless of their age differences. On the other hand, participant I believed the group members to be spiritually connected to her. They represented parts of herself. She gained better understanding of herself when she, together with the members, worked to solve an issue.

It is a responsibility and it is a learning process for me. I see my group members as a mirror or a reflection of myself. Sometimes when I asked a question or when we discussed something, and I heard their responses, it seemed like "eh, I do have this type of thinking in my mind..." they are like a mirror to reflect on my own emotion and my thinking. (Participant A, 33-37)

I have a belief that people come to me because that someone has some kind of connection with me. If not, we would not be meeting each other. So, when the group is formed, somehow these people are the reflection of me, some parts of me. So I tend to see them as part of me. From them, I can see my strength and weakness. When they did not come, I would say the issue is in me. When they turned to me, I could say the issue is in me, and I tried to solve it. Then I would use my part to help them. (Participant I, 24-29)

Several trainees, K, D, and J felt they gained more knowledge about human development, and at the same time became aware of the complexity of being a leader in counseling

group. For participant D, the group fed her curiosity about how others perceived themselves.

From the group counselling that I had recently conducted, I'm quite curious about how other people perceive group counselling. The second thing would be my view towards them. I know each of them has their own self problem, I'm curious on how they perceive their self-confidence and whether they are satisfied with themselves or not. (Participant D, 22-25)

Even though the trainees were actively involved with the group they still adhered to the leadership role. For participants K and J, the group flows and the different interaction patterns they observed between members affected them emotionally. Yet, they enjoyed the challenges. Participant K said,

It is challenging. I do not deny that group is actually challenging because I have to take into consideration so many heads. Many heads mean many different ideas, behaviours, and so much personal background information to remember. ... I enjoy it when I can lead a session smoothly and I see positive changes in members like cohesiveness or they can talk to each other. I felt stress when I failed. I do not like it when I cannot do as I planned or I fail to form a positive group dynamics. (Participant K, 37-39, 42-46)

As a leader in group counselling, the relationship the trainees established with group members is important for the group as well as for their personal development. Through their participation in the group, they became aware of some of the similarities in the way they experienced and dealt with life issues. Group counselling opens the venue for them to understand themselves and others. Finally, the trainees gained personal satisfaction when they were able to perform the role of a counsellor, interact with members at the same level, and go through the ups and downs of the group process.

To conclude, most of the counsellor trainees were comfortable to assume the leadership roles in the group. They preferred to facilitate, guide, share information, motivate, and assess the group progress. Several trainees saw themselves as a catalyst to motivate members to try new behaviour. They found satisfaction when they could encourage members to be more congruent with their life, confront their weaknesses, and be more responsible for their acts. Some trainees believed they could understand the members' world by being personally involved with the group dynamics. By putting aside the leader's role, they felt more welcomed by the members. They discovered they shared many similarities with the members, especially in the way they dealt with personal life issues. As the group progressed, the trainees also went through personal and professional growth. The group became the mean for them to explore other people's world as well as theirs.

Leadership Functions

The trainees took some time to reflect on their leadership functions during the conflict. From the data, four subthemes related to the leadership functions were identified: (i) providing meaning, (ii) facilitating sharing, (iii) executive function, and (iv) providing support. The trainees described how they performed and applied the different functions during the conflict.

Providing meaning

The counsellor trainees shared how they attributed meaning to the conflict they encountered in the group. They applied the knowledge on group development and group

theories to understand the conflict. Once they derived at its meaning, they discussed it with the group. Participant L mentioned the importance of the leader to observe and evaluate the group dynamics before he or she engaged in interpreting the event.

Another thing that is important is group observation. ...I need to observe the reactions, attitudes and behaviours of group members. (Participant L, 71-73)

Once the leader is certain with his or her observation, then meaningful evaluation of the event could be established and shared with the group. Participants C, H, and A described how they processed the conflict within the group.

I tried to find out the cause using the exploration skills. I used questions to let her think about the issue. I would look for the positive and maybe do some reflection to let the member understand her feelings. I would use the technique from REBT by focusing on her irrational thinking. I checked if there was irrational thinking and showed her how the irrational thinking affected her behaviour and feelings. (Participant C, 177-181)

I asked what is going on. ...Sometimes, I gave information about the conflict they were having. ...I thought by giving the information it helped me to tell them what I had in mind. And, for them to understand what's going on in the group. (Participant H, 187, 189-190, 191-192)

I gave my points from the third person perspective. If the condition allowed I might ask other members to join. If not I straight away showed the blind spot and discussed it. ... To let them understand that we grew through our sharing. ... during the sharing everyone learns from each other. (Participant A, 201-203, 204, 207-208)

In providing meaning, the trainees, using the attending and exploring skills, engaged in exploration, evaluation, and interpretation of the conflict episodes. Through the process, the trainees hoped to shed some lights on the conflict.

Facilitating sharing

Conflict can be an unsettling experience to certain members. Being caught in the process either directly or indirectly can trigger some negative feelings in them. Faced with the situation, participants A, E, and K believed they had to encourage members to share their feelings and ideas about the situation. At the same time, they hoped members would evaluate their roles in creating the frictions.

When two group members shared different ideas, I would let them get their chance to share their ideas. So that, I could let B see why A say such thing. I asked some questions to encourage them to express more, "Why are you saying something like that? Can you explain more to the group?" ... So they would sort of understand a little bit about their roles. Let them see their responsibility towards other group members (Participant A, 209-213, 208-209)

I would facilitate and guide them ...To let them know the reason for their feelings. From here, they would understand each other. (Participant E, 140, 142-143)

Sometimes, I do confrontation when they are not serious. One minute he says this and the next minute he says something different. (Participant K, 76-77)

In facilitating sharing, the trainees motivated members to explore their feelings and thoughts towards each other and towards the conflict. Sometimes, the trainees had to confront members to be responsible with their actions.

Executive function

The trainees described their experience using power to maintain the social structure of the group. Participants B, C, F, G, J, K, and L shared how they applied some control over the group direction. Participant B reevaluated the group structure to determine how it has

contributed to the conflict development, and to modify the structure where necessary. He said,

I recollected the information from the members to find out the aspects of the conflict that not suitable for them, or whether the way I structured the group was not preferable to them. So, I checked what their expectation was towards the group and what kind of groups they liked. I would check on those things before I planned for the next session. (Participant B, 204-208)

Participant G, on the other hand, directed the group to adhere to its rules. He focused on asking the members to respect each other if they were to solve the conflict. He said,

If the conflict were of the more serious type, like personal attack, I would go back to the ground rules. I would mention, "Our group has agreed that we have to respect each other". After that, I would go to the cause of the conflict and discuss it in the group. (Participant G, 158-160)

As for participants C and L, they resorted to giving advice and hoped it would dissolve the conflict. Participant C said,

I gave her some advice. I asked her to go back and think of the advice or the story I shared with her. Or, I showed her some websites, and she could go back and read them. (Participant C, 181-183)

Participants K and J used their authority power to require the members to engage in some kind of activities. Through the activities, the members could unravel the cause of the conflict, as well as their contribution to it. Participant K said,

I would evaluate the issue that caused the conflict. If I could rationalize the issue, then I would confront the members.... If they were feeling uncomfortable, I would do activities. I hope through the activities, the members could understand why the conflict happened and how they could feel comfortable again. .. This allowed the members to evaluate and self-criticize their actions. (Participant K, 192 – 197)

Finally, participant F would gradually impose her power over the group in order to contain the conflict from getting out of hand. She said,

I listened and tried to understand what was happening to him or her.... Listen to all he wants to talk and try to figure out what is actually happening to the person or to the whole group. We will discuss together. ...Then, I voiced out my views or opinion to him. If it were still out of control, I would pull him out of the room, and talk to him personally. If not, other members would be affected or offended by this group member. (Participant F, 140-141, 146-147, 141-143)

The trainees resorted to using their power as the group leader when necessary. They used the power to encourage members to follow the group rules, to engage in some activity, to work on their goals, and to maintain the group flow. Sometimes, the trainee exercised the power to some extreme by directly alienated a member from the group for fearing the person would offend other members.

Providing support

As leaders, the trainees realized their role was to protect members from psychologically challenging situation, and to give support and encouragement when needed. One way to do it is by asking for clarification in the members' sharing. Clarification of certain phrase or words enabled the trainees and the group to understand the issue as it was perceived by certain members. Participants I, D, and H shared how they showed concern to the group. Following are some excerpts from the participants.

...when conflict happened, I was ready to open up myself, to share what I really thought and felt towards the group. I appreciated them for speaking it out, and then encouraged them to talk more on the issue, describe more. (Participant I, 176-178)

I will ask for clarification if I do not understand a certain phrase or I feel the member needs to explain certain words she used. Normally after a person shared, other members would respond. They asked, "What do you mean by that?" But, at other times, the group is silent. So, when it happened, I would ask for clarification and encourage them to elaborate more. I like to pick up on words which I do not understand and then ask them to clarify. So that they can elaborate and I can better understand how she perceives things. (Participant D, 59-65)

In my experience, when members had conflict towards one person, I tried to understand why and then I would make sure they understand why she was behaving that way. It was hard to make them understand. I mean it is my responsibility to make them understand each other. (Participant H, 60 - 64)

It is important for the trainees to show their concern and support for the members during the trying time of conflict. They spent more time listening, asking for clarification, and supporting the members' sharing as much as they needed to. They did not prejudge or impose any personal value on the sharing. Instead, they let the members express themselves and learn to accept one another.

In short, the analysis reveals that the trainees were selective when applying the leadership functions to accommodate the seriousness of the conflict. Some tried to experiment with the power entrusted to maintain certain level of authority over the group dynamics, and at the same time encourage free expression of feelings and thoughts among the members.

As a conclusion, the first part of the data analysis has focused on the qualitative data. The counsellor trainees' interview data were analyzed for their experience with conflict in group counselling, conflict management strategies, attitude towards conflict, and perceptions of group leadership functions during conflicts. Table 9 summarized the themes and subthemes as shared by the participants.

Table 9: Themes and Subthemes Identified from Qualitative Data Analysis

Themes	Subthemes	Participant											
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Definitions of conflict	Disagreement in ideas	√		√	√		√			√			√
Triggering factors	Counterproductive behaviours		√							√		√	
	Personality differences	√		√	√		√	√	√		√		
	Expression of negative emotions	√										√	
	Communication style					√				√			√
	Discussion of sensitive issues											√	
	Incompetent leader											√	
Conflict development	Disrespectful behaviours	√		√	√				√				√
	Defensive behaviours	√				√	√						√
	Reluctant to share		√										
	Lack of progress		√									√	
Conflict styles	Avoiding	√	√		√								√
	Third party			√									
Group skills	Attending skills			√	√	√						√	
	Confronting skill		√										
	Blocking skill	√	√	√		√	√						
	Facilitating skill	√	√										
Personal Creativity	Activity										√	√	
	Personality assessment										√		
Affective component	Negative emotions	√		√	√		√	√	√			√	√
	Overt expressions			√	√					√			√
	Physiological changes	√	√	√	√			√	√		√	√	
Conflict scripts	Conflict as resistance	√	√	√		√		√				√	√
	Conflict as weakness	√	√			√		√	√			√	√
	Conflict as failure					√				√	√	√	
	Conflict is growth	√	√	√				√		√	√	√	√
Behaviour component	Stop it	√		√			√						
	Ignore it		√		√						√		√
	Become quiet				√				√	√		√	
	Turn aggressive					√			√	√			
	Analyze it							√					
Group Leadership	Leadership skills		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Personal disposition	√							√				
Leadership roles	As a leader		√	√		√		√	√		√	√	
	As a catalyst	√	√	√		√	√	√					
	As a participator	√			√					√	√	√	√
Leadership functions	Providing meaning	√		√					√				√
	Facilitating sharing	√				√						√	

Executive function	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Providing support		√		√		√	

The second part of the data analysis will continue with the analysis of the hypotheses of the study. There are four hypotheses to be analyzed.

4.4 Quantitative Data Analysis

This part of data analysis focuses on the quantitative findings which aims to answer four questions related to the second objective of the study. The data analysis begins with the introduction of the subjects and follows with the presentation of data analysis on research questions 5 to 8.

4.4.1 Background Information of Participants

The participants for the quantitative data collections consisted of 31 graduate students from the Guidance and Counselling program at the Faculty of Educational Studies, UPM. They were randomly selected among the students who had completed all the compulsory counselling courses as designated in the graduate study program. There were 24 females and seven males, with a mean age of 28.4 years (range = 25-39 years). Of the sample, 15 were Malay students, 14 were Chinese, and two were Others. The majority of the participants were unemployed (71.0%), 16.2% were in teaching posts, and the other 12.8% included librarian, research assistant, and others. None of them had attended a workshop on conflict management training. See Table 10.

Table 10: Demographic Information of Participants of the One-group Pretest-Posttest

		Experimental Design		
		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Female	24	77.4	77.4
	Male	7	22.6	100.0
Age	25-30	24	77.4	77.4
	31-35	7	22.6	100.0
Ethnic group	Malay	15	48.4	48.4
	Chinese	14	48.4	96.8
	Others	2	3.2	100.0
Occupation	Unemployed	22	71.0	71.0
	Teacher	3	9.7	80.7
	Librarian	1	3.2	83.9
	Research assistant	1	3.2	87.1
	Lecturer	2	6.5	93.6
	Others	2	6.5	100.0

4.4.2 Normality Test

In order to determine whether the participants were equal in term of their knowledge and skills, the researcher has conducted a normality test. The findings on the normality test are shown in **Table 8**. The values of skewness and kurtosis are to explain whether the variables are normally distributed. If the values of both skewness and kurtosis are between -1 and +1 respectively, it indicates the data collected are normally distributed (Montcalm & Royse, 2002). According to Table 11, the data of the four questionnaires that were collected in this study are all normally distributed. For example, the skewness and kurtosis values is -.109 and -.307 respectively for the Knowledge on Conflict, -.349

and -.457 respectively for the Conflict Management Strategies, -.709 and .503 respectively for the Attitude towards Conflict, and .685 and -.392 respectively for the Attitude towards Group Leadership Functions. Since the data were normally distributed, hence the data collected was eligible for the parametric statistical tests.

Table 11: Test on Normal Distribution of Questionnaires

Questionnaire	Skewness	Kurtosis
Knowledge of Conflict	-.109	-.307
Conflict Management Strategies	-.349	-.457
Attitude towards Conflict	-.709	.503
Attitude towards Group Leadership Functions	.685	-.392

4.4.3 Inferential Statistics

In order to answer the research questions, the participants were given a set of questionnaires before and after they attended the conflict management training module workshop. The questionnaires consisted of demography information, knowledge on conflict, conflict management strategies, attitude towards conflict, and attitude towards group leadership functions. This part of the study conducted the inferential statistics to test hypotheses using the paired-sample t-test.

4.4.3.1 Research Question No. 5: What is the effect of Conflict Management Training Module on counsellor trainees knowledge on conflict?

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores on counsellor trainees’ knowledge on conflict after they have completed the training module.

There was a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores of the counsellor trainees’ knowledge on conflict after they have completed the Conflict Management Training Module, $t(30) = 17.977, p < .05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 12: Differences in the Pretest and Posttest scores of Knowledge on Conflict

		Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
CMTM	Pre	49.48	6.836	30	17.977	.000
	Post	70.77	4.425			

The mean comparison showed a significant difference in the trainees’ knowledge scores before and after the training. The mean score before the training was 49.48 and the posttest score was 70.77, an increase of 21.29 points. The result suggested that the trainees showed positive changes in their knowledge on conflict, group leadership, and conflict management strategies after attending the workshop.

Paired sample t-test of the items on the CMTM showed that all the items were significant at $p < .05$ level. The result suggested that after the workshop the trainees’ knowledge and understanding of conflict, leadership functions, and ability to handle conflict have shown significant improvement.

Table 13: Paired Sample t-test Results of Knowledge on Conflict

		Mean scores		Mean dif	Std Dev	t	df	Sig
Pair 1	I understand the objectives of group counselling.	Pre	3.65					
		Post	4.48	.839	.735	6.356	30	.000
Pair 2	I understand the responsibilities of leader in group counselling.	Pre	3.74					
		Post	4.68	.935	.727	7.161	30	.000
Pair 3	I understand my attitude towards leadership in group counselling.	Pre	3.55					
		Post	4.48	.935	.629	8.280	30	.000
Pair 4	I understand my functions as a leader in group counselling.	Pre	3.68					
		Post	4.61	.935	.680	7.660	30	.000
Pair 5	I understand the functions of conflict in group counselling.	Pre	2.87					
		Post	4.42	1.548	.888	9.704	30	.000
Pair 6	I understand my attitude towards conflict in group counselling.	Pre	3.10					
		Post	4.48	1.387	.803	9.615	30	.000
Pair 7	I can identify critical incidents in group counselling.	Pre	2.74					
		Post	4.32	1.581	.848	10.384	30	.000
Pair 8	I understand the different types of conflict in group counselling.	Pre	2.65					
		Post	4.39	1.742	.930	10.431	30	.000
Pair 9	I understand the different approaches to conflict management.	Pre	2.06					
		Post	4.74	2.677	.909	16.404	30	.000
Pair 10	I acquire some group leadership skills.	Pre	3.29					
		Post	4.29	1.000	.683	8.150	30	.000
Pair 11	I can handle intrapersonal conflict in group counselling.	Pre	2.48					
		Post	3.97	1.484	.769	10.743	30	.000
Pair 12	I can handle interpersonal conflict in group counselling.	Pre	2.71					
		Post	4.13	1.419	.720	10.977	30	.000
Pair 13	I can handle group level conflict in group counselling.	Pre	2.35					
		Post	3.74	1.387	.667	11.575	30	.000

Paired sample t-test of the items on the KC showed that all items were significant at $p < .05$ level. The results showed that in term of knowledge on conflict, items 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 were significant at $p < .05$ level. Item 5 has $[t(30) = 1.548, p < .05]$, item 6 has $[t(30) = 1.387, p < .05]$, item 7 has $[t(30) = 1.581, p < .05]$, item 8 has $[t(30) = 1.742, p < .05]$, and item 9 has $[t(30) = 2.677, p < .05]$. The results suggested that after the training, the

trainees gained an increase in knowledge about the functions of conflict and their attitude. They were able to identify critical incidents and could understand the different types of conflict, and the different approaches to conflict management.

In term of the group leadership functions, items 1, 2, 3, and 4 were significant at $p < .05$ level. Item 1 has [$t(30) = 0.839, p < .05$], item 2 has [$t(30) = 0.935, p < .05$], item 3 has [$t(30) = 0.935, p < .05$], and item 4 has [$t(30) = 0.935, p < .05$]. The posttest scores suggested that the trainees have better understanding of the objectives of group counselling, their attitude, and leadership functions in group counselling.

As for the trainees' ability to acquire better conflict management strategies, items 10, 11, 12, and 13 were significant at $p < .05$ level. Item 10 has [$t(30) = 1.000, p < .05$], item 11 has [$t(30) = 1.484, p < .05$], item 12 has [$t(30) = 1.419, p < .05$], and item 13 has [$t(30) = 1.387, p < .05$]. The findings showed that after the workshop, the trainees believed they have acquired some group skills and were better able to manage the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group level conflicts.

4.4.3.2 Research Question No. 6: What is the effect of Conflict Management Training Module on counsellor trainees conflict management strategies?

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores on counsellor trainees' conflict management strategies after they have completed the training module.

There was a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores in the Conflict Management Strategies among the counsellor trainees after completing the conflict

management training module, $t(30) = 17.422$, $p < .05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 14: Differences in the Pretest and Posttest Scores of Conflict Management

		Strategies		df	t	Sig
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
CMS	Pre	83.81	10.809	30	17.422	.000
	Post	106.13	7.406			

The mean comparison showed a significant difference in scores before and after the training. The mean score before the training was 83.81 and the posttest score was 106.13, an increase of 22.32 points. The result suggested that the participants showed a big increase in their ability to apply conflict management strategies after they have completed the training.

Table 15: Paired-Samples t-test Results of Conflict Management Strategies

		Mean scores		Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig
Pair 1	Respond to nonverbal communication	Pre	3.10	.903	.651	7.726	30	.000
		Post	4.00					
Pair 2	Respond to feelings	Pre	3.19	1.097	.651	9.382	30	.000
		Post	4.29					
Pair 3	Focus on the conflict	Pre	3.00	1.194	.873	7.616	30	.000
		Post	4.19					
Pair 4	Deal with one issue at a time	Pre	3.39	.839	.583	8.011	30	.000
		Post	4.23					
Pair 5	Able to manage emotions	Pre	3.48	.903	.746	6.738	30	.000
		Post	4.39					
Pair 6	Able to remain calm	Pre	3.74	.710	.693	5.706	30	.000
		Post	4.45					

Pair 7	Use respectful words towards group members	Pre 3.90 Post 4.35	.452	.568	4.427	30	.000
Pair 8	Show respectful actions towards group members	Pre 4.16 Post 4.58	.419	.502	4.655	30	.000
Pair 9	Listen to all opinions	Pre 3.87 Post 4.35	.484	.769	3.503	30	.001
Pair 10	Demonstrate understanding of differing perspectives	Pre 3.61 Post 4.03	.419	.620	3.763	30	.001
Pair 11	Listen in a supportive way, using the whole body	Pre 3.52 Post 4.23	.710	.864	4.574	30	.000
Pair 12	Handle conflict in a sensitive way	Pre 2.61 Post 4.03	1.419	.720	10.977	30	.000
Pair 13	Handle differences in a sensitive way	Pre 2.68 Post 4.16	1.484	.677	12.207	30	.000
Pair 14	Reframe the conflict	Pre 2.87 Post 3.87	1.000	.894	6.225	30	.000
Pair 15	Clarify the nature of the problem	Pre 3.13 Post 3.90	.774	.617	6.987	30	.000
Pair 16	Give feedback in a constructive way	Pre 2.87 Post 4.16	1.290	.783	9.177	30	.000
Pair 17	Use humor effectively	Pre 2.90 Post 3.42	.516	.626	4.593	30	.000
Pair 18	Do not prejudge	Pre 3.39 Post 4.19	.806	.792	5.666	30	.000
Pair 19	Do not interrupt the expression of ideas	Pre 3.68 Post 4.61	.935	.854	6.100	30	.000
Pair 20	Do not interrupt the expression of feelings	Pre 3.74 Post 4.65	.903	.746	6.738	30	.000
Pair 21	Does not blame anyone	Pre 3.68 Post 4.68	1.000	.683	8.150	30	.000
Pair 22	Avoid from presenting personal opinion	Pre 2.97 Post 4.16	1.194	.946	7.026	30	.000
Pair 23	Do not make personal attacks	Pre 3.77 Post 4.55	.774	.845	5.101	30	.000
Pair 24	Generate new perspective	Pre 3.03 Post 4.10	1.065	.727	8.149	30	.000

Pair 25	Summarize main points	Pre	3.52	1.032	.657	8.742	30	.000
		Post	4.55					

Paired sample t-test of the items on the CMS showed that all the items were significant at $p < .05$ level. The result showed that the trainees experience an increase or improvement in their ability to perform the conflict management strategies. Some of the skills they reported as showing big improvements include their ability to respond to feelings, focus on conflict, handle differences sensitively, give feedback constructively, avoid from giving personal opinion, generate new perspectives, and summarize the main points.

4.4.3.3 Research Question No. 7: What is the effect of Conflict Management Training Module on counsellor trainees' attitude towards conflict in group counseling?

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores on counsellor trainees' attitude towards conflict in group counselling after they have completed the training module.

There was a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores in the Attitude towards Conflict in group counselling scale among the counsellor trainees after they have completed the conflict management training module, $t(30) = 7.655$, $p < .05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 16: Differences in the Pretest and Posttest Scores of Attitude towards Conflict

		Mean	Std. Deviation	df	T	Sig
ATC	Pre	69.48	3.855	30	7.655	.000
	Post	74.61	4.863			

The mean comparison showed a significant difference in scores before and after the training. The mean score before the training was 69.48 and the posttest score was 74.61, an increase of 5.13 points.

Table 17: Paired-Samples t-test Results of Attitude towards Conflict

		Mean scores	Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig
Pair 1	To me, conflict helps groups develop to the next stage.	Pre 4.00 Post 4.45	.452	.888	2.830	30	.008
Pair 2	To me, the group should be without conflict.	Pre 3.87 Post 4.39	.516	.926	3.102	30	.004
Pair 3	To me, conflict can cause psychological pressure to group members.	Pre 3.90 Post 3.52	.387	.882	-2.443	30	.021
Pair 4	To me, conflict strengthens relationship amongst group members.	Pre 3.77 Post 4.19	.419	.720	3.243	30	.003
Pair 5	I fail as a leader if I cannot resolve conflicts in the group.	Pre 3.29 Post 3.48	.194	1.250	.862	30	.395
Pair 6	I feel mentally stuck when conflict happens in the group.	Pre 3.32 Post 3.77	.452	1.207	2.084	30	.046
Pair 7	Conflict makes me more creative in a group.	Pre 3.87 Post 4.39	.516	.570	5.043	30	.000
Pair 8	Conflict makes me more tolerant of individual differences.	Pre 4.26 Post 4.65	.387	.667	3.230	30	.003
Pair 9	I will try to prevent discussion of issues that can cause conflict in group like personal, ethnic or religious issues.	Pre 2.94 Post 3.61	.677	1.077	3.503	30	.001
Pair 10	I will stop the group when conflict happens.	Pre 3.81 Post 4.13	.323	1.045	1.718	30	.096

Pair 11	I will try to resolve conflict when it happens.	Pre Post	3.84 4.48	.645	.709	5.064	30	.000
Pair 12	I will encourage discussion among members to resolve the conflict.	Pre Post	4.42 4.65	.226	.669	1.880	30	.070
Pair 13	I feel angry when members try to impose their ideas on others.	Pre Post	3.26 3.58	.323	1.249	1.438	30	.161
Pair 14	I feel scared when members raised their voice when speaking.	Pre Post	3.26 3.48	.226	1.117	1.126	30	.269
Pair 15	I feel happy when member shows respect to ideas different from his/ her.	Pre Post	4.55 4.74	.194	.946	1.139	30	.264
Pair 16	I feel sad when conflict causes members to be unfriendly to each other.	Pre Post	3.61 3.55	-.065	1.153	-.312	30	.758
Pair 17	I feel pressured when members argue with each other.	Pre Post	2.52 3.16	.645	1.170	3.069	30	.005
Pair 18	I get worried when I cannot help to solve conflict that happens in the group.	Pre Post	3.32 3.42	.100	.965	-1.489	30	.147
Pair 19	I feel disappointed when conflict causes group to be silent.	Pre Post	3.68 2.97	-.71	1.170	-1.688	30	.102

Paired samples t-test of the items on the ATC showed mixed results. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 17 are significant at $p < .05$ level. Item 1 has $[t(30) = 2.830, p < .05]$, item 2 has $[t(30) = 3.102, p < .05]$, item 3 has $[t(30) = -2.443, p < .05]$, item 4 has $[t(30) = 3.243, p < .05]$, item 6 has $[t(30) = 2.084, p < .05]$, item 7 has $[t(30) = 5.043, p < .05]$, item 8 has $[t(30) = 3.230, p < .05]$, item 9 has $[t(30) = 3.503, p < .05]$, item 11 has $[t(30) = 5.064, p < .05]$, and item 17 has $[t(30) = 3.069, p < .05]$. The results suggested that after the workshop the trainees experienced positive changes in their attitude towards conflict in group counselling. They believed conflicts helped the group progress to a higher stage and strengthen relationship among group members. The trainees did not strongly believe that conflicts caused psychological pressure on members, and they did

not strongly feel mentally stuck being caught in the conflict. They agreed that conflicts made them more creative and tolerant of individual differences and less pressured when seeing members argued. They believed that to resolve the conflict they should try to tolerate discussion of sensitive issues brought up in the group.

Items 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 19 did not differ significantly in their scores before and after the training with $p > .05$ level. Item 5 has $[t(30) = 0.862, p > .05]$, item 10 has $[t(30) = 1.718, p > .05]$, item 12 has $[t(30) = 1.880, p > .05]$, item 13 has $[t(30) = 1.438, p > .05]$, item 14 has $[t(30) = 1.126, p > .05]$, item 15 has $[t(30) = 1.139, p > .05]$, item 16 has $[t(30) = -0.312, p > .05]$, item 18 has $[t(30) = -1.489, p > .05]$, and item 19 has $[t(30) = -1.688, p > .05]$. The results showed that the trainees did not experience positive change in their belief that they failed as a leader if they could not solve the conflict, they might stop the group when the conflict happened, or they did not strongly believe that discussion may help resolve conflict. The trainees also did not show significant change in their feelings towards conflict in group counselling. They did not strongly agree with feeling angry when members tried to impose their ideas on others in the group, or feeling scared when members raise their voice in argument, or feeling sad when members become unfriendly to each other, or worried when they could not solve the conflict, or disappointment with silent. The trainees also reported no change in their feelings when group members showed respect for each other.

4.4.3.4 Research Question No 8:What is the effect of Conflict Management Training Module on counsellor trainees attitudes towards group leadership functions?

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the pretest and the posttest scores on counsellor trainees’ attitude towards group leadership functions after they have completed the training module.

There was a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores in the Attitude towards Group Leadership Functions among the counsellor trainees after they had completed the conflict management training module, $t(30) = 7.712, p < .05$. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 18: Differences in the Pretest and Posttest Scores of Attitude towards Group Leadership Functions

		Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig
AGLF	Pre	100.19	6.896	30	7.712	.000
	Post	111.10	7.277			

The mean comparison showed a significant difference in scores before and after the training. The mean score before the training was 100.19 and the posttest score was 111.10 showing an increase of 10.91 points. The result suggested that the trainees experienced some positive change in their attitude towards their responsibilities as group counsellors.

Table 19: Paired-Samples t-test Results of Attitude towards Group Leadership Functions

		Mean scores		Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig
Pair 1	Accept the expression of feelings among group members.	Pre	4.32	.387	.558	3.860	30	.001
		Post	4.71					
Pair 2	Help members express their positive feelings in the group.	Pre	4.16	.516	.570	5.043	30	.000
		Post	4.68					
Pair 3	Feel uncomfortable when members express their negative feelings in the group.	Pre	3.55	.839	.735	6.356	30	.000
		Post	4.39					
Pair 4	Feel pressured to be in the group.	Pre	3.81	.645	.709	5.064	30	.000
		Post	4.45					
Pair 5	Discourage counterproductive behaviour in the group (late to group; cut off member's sharing).	Pre	3.55	.548	1.150	2.655	30	.013
		Post	4.10					
Pair 6	Am willing to try new ways of doing things in the group.	Pre	4.26	.419	.620	3.763	30	.001
		Post	4.68					
Pair 7	Motivate group members to look into their less effective behaviours.	Pre	4.29	.387	.558	3.860	30	.001
		Post	4.68					
Pair 8	Enjoy being part of the group dynamics.	Pre	4.35	.355	.486	4.062	30	.000
		Post	4.71					
Pair 9	Challenge group members to make changes in their life.	Pre	4.29	.387	.761	2.834	30	.008
		Post	4.68					
Pair 10	Am willing to contribute to the positive change in a member's life.	Pre	4.26	.355	.755	2.617	30	.014
		Post	4.61					
Pair 11	Keep my distance from getting personally involved with group members.	Pre	4.29	.419	.564	4.139	30	.000
		Post	4.71					
Pair 12	Am happy when members show positive change in the group.	Pre	4.65	.226	.497	2.528	30	.017
		Post	4.87					
Pair 13	Find it difficult to empathize with the group members' issues.	Pre	4.23	.194	.703	1.532	30	.136
		Post	4.42					
Pair 14	Protect members from psychological pressure caused by other group members.	Pre	3.71	.323	.832	2.158	30	.039
		Post	4.03					
Pair 15	Do not share my experiences of the group dynamics with the members.	Pre	3.84	.387	.803	2.683	30	.012
		Post	4.23					
Pair 16	Guide members towardsss the change they desired.	Pre	4.16	.323	.702	2.559	30	.016
		Post	4.48					

Pair 17	Provide reasons for members to understand their behaviours within the group context.	Pre Post	3.48 3.84	.355	.839	2.356	30	.025
Pair 18	Clarify misunderstanding between members.	Pre Post	4.00 4.58	.581	.620	5.211	30	.000
Pair 19	Help members to solve their problems.	Pre Post	3.61 4.13	.516	.926	3.102	30	.004
Pair 20	Help to interpret events in the group using counselling theory.	Pre Post	3.16 3.74	.581	1.025	3.153	30	.004
Pair 21	Educate members on their roles as group members.	Pre Post	4.13 4.45	.323	.599	2.997	30	.005
Pair 22	Am accountable for the success of the group.	Pre Post	3.58 4.03	.452	.995	2.528	30	.017
Pair 23	Am not responsible to meet the psychological needs of the group members.	Pre Post	3.55 3.90	.355	.950	2.079	30	.046
Pair 24	Let group members behave as they wish in the group.	Pre Post	2.55 2.90	.355	1.253	1.577	30	.125
Pair 25	Offer advice when asked by group members.	Pre Post	2.74 3.00	.258	.773	1.858	30	.073
Pair 26	Am willing to share my leadership role when members show their confidence to lead the group.	Pre Post	3.68 4.10	.419	1.205	1.938	30	.062

Paired samples t-tests of the items on the Attitude towards Group Leadership Functions showed slightly mixed results. Most of the items, number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23 were all significant at $p < .05$ level. Item 1 has [$t(30) = 3.860$, $p < .05$], item 2 has [$t(30) = 5.043$, $p < .05$], item 3 has [$t(30) = 6.356$, $p < .05$], item 4 has [$t(30) = 5.064$, $p < .05$], item 5 has [$t(30) = 2.655$, $p < .05$], item 6 has [$t(30) = 3.763$, $p < .05$], item 7 has [$t(30) = 3.860$, $p < .05$], item 8 has [$t(30) = 4.062$, $p < .05$], item 9 has [$t(30) = 2.834$, $p < .05$], item 10 has [$t(30) = 2.617$, $p < .05$], item 11 has [$t(30) = 4.139$, $p < .05$], item 12 has [$t(30) = 2.528$, $p < .05$], item 14 has [$t(30) = 2.158$, $p < .05$], item 15 has [$t(30) = 2.683$, $p < .05$], item 16 has [$t(30) = 2.559$, $p < .05$], item 17 has [$t(30) = 2.356$, $p < .05$], item 18 has [$t(30) = 5.211$, $p < .05$],

.05], item 19 has [$t(30) = 3.102, p < .05$], item 20 has [$t(30) = 3.153, p < .05$], item 21 has [$t(30) = 2.997, p < .05$], item 22 has [$t(30) = 2.528, p < .05$], and item 23 has [$t(30) = 2.079, p < .05$]. The findings suggested that the training workshop had resulted in changes to the trainees' attitude towards their responsibilities to deal with group members' expressions of positive and negative feelings, to discourage counterproductive behaviour, to try new behaviours, to motivate members to look into their less productive behaviours, and to enjoy being part of the group dynamics.

The results suggested that the trainees also showed some attitude change in term of challenging members to make changes in their life, protecting members from psychological pressure, interpreting events happening in the group, helping members solve problems, educating them on their group roles, and willingness to contribute to positive change in members. The trainees were ready to share their personal experience, be responsible for the group success, and to meet the psychological needs of the group.

On the other hand, items 13, 24, 25, and 26 did not differ significantly in their scores before and after the training at $p > .05$ level. Item 13 has [$t(30) = 1.532, p > .05$], item 24 has [$t(30) = 1.577, p > .05$], item 25 has [$t(30) = 1.858, p > .05$], and item 26 has [$t(30) = 1.938, p > .05$]. The results showed that even though there were positive changes in the item scores before and after the training, they were not sufficient to be significant. The trainees reported they still found it difficult to empathize with certain issues discussed in the group, did not feel comfortable giving advice, and were unwilling to share their leadership roles with group members.

There were four hypotheses being tested in this study. Null hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 were tested and then rejected. The trainees reported going through significant changes after attending the conflict management training workshop. They experienced positive increases in their knowledge, skills, and attitude. Specifically, they gained better understanding of conflicts and leadership functions, improved on their conflict management strategies, had become more positive in their attitude towards conflict and towards group leadership functions in group counselling.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed the data analysis for the qualitative and the quantitative data. For the qualitative data, four research questions were analyzed, whereas for the quantitative data four hypotheses were tested. The qualitative data explores the counsellor trainees' experience with conflict in group counselling, their conflict management strategies, attitude towards conflict in group counselling, and perceptions of group leadership functions. Several themes and subthemes have been identified and elaborated under each of the topics. As for the hypothesis testing, all the four hypotheses are rejected. The trainees show significant changes after completing the conflict management training module. They gain improvement in their knowledge on conflicts and group leadership functions and acquisition of conflict management strategies. They also experience favorable attitude towards conflict and towards leadership functions as counsellors in group counselling.