

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the past research carried out in the area of group counselling. The chapter divides the literature into four main topics: leadership in group counselling, conflict management strategies, leadership and conflict management in group counselling, and research on group counselling in Malaysia. Each topic is explored and analyzed. At the end of the chapter, a summary is provided.

2.2 Leadership in Group Counselling

2.2.1 Definition of Leadership in Group Counselling

Group work researchers view it as a challenging task to identify what constitutes the appropriate meaning of leadership in group counselling. Ward (2005) defines leadership as the process of planning, conducting, and evaluating groups. Most often, it refers to the general idea of how a group works.

Group leadership reflects the overall conceptual scheme about why and how groups work. A number of leadership styles has been developed to describe helpful patterns of

behaviour of group leaders. Some of the leadership styles are introduced by Lieberman, et al. (1973) who focus on four leadership functions. The functions include the emotional stimulation, caring, meaning attribution, and executive function. Another style is by Anderson (1985). He introduces four major styles of leader behaviours, which are providing, processing, catalyzing, and directing functions. The third leadership style is developed by Mackenzie et al. (1987) who produce five leadership factors of which three are positive and two are negative. The positive factors are caring, charismatic, and skillful. The negative factors include inhibiting and controlling. In addition, Yalom (1985) offers the fourth perspective on leadership. He describes leadership in a sequential manner where leaders need to attend to (1) the integration of new members and the general cohesiveness of the group process, (2) development of group norms, and (3) focus on the here-and-now experiences.

All of the leadership styles look at the responsibility of group counsellors from several perspectives. Altogether, the styles stress on having counsellors who are able to view the group holistically, to provide some structure or group norms, to focus on the present, to guide members to express their feelings and thoughts, to build a safe environment for members to do self-reflection without being judged, and finally to provide meaning or new perspectives to their experience.

In term of personality characteristics of effective group counsellors, the ideal qualities for counsellors appear to be almost infinite, and it is unlikely that many potential group leaders will possess them all (Gladding, 2003; 2012). Kottler (2001) identifies some of the personal dispositions most often associated with an effective group leader such as

trustworthy, honest, flexible, compassion, clear-headedness, self-acceptance, charismatic, and have a sense of humor. Corey (2010) comes out with a list of personal characteristics he considers as deem important and often possessed by effective group leaders. The personal qualities include courage, willingness to model, presence, goodwill and caring, believe in group process, openness, nondefensiveness in coping with criticism, becoming aware of own culture, personal power, stamina, willingness to seek new experiences, self-awareness, sense of humor, inventiveness, and personal dedication and commitment. Past research on group leaders' characteristics has not identified any one particular personal quality that could differentiate an effective from a less effective leader (Gladding, 2012; Kottler, 2001). Effective group leaders possess a combination of certain personal qualities that facilitate their communication with group members. These qualities promote the successful integration of the leader and the group and help the group work move efficiently towards a common goal (Gladding, 2003). On the other hand, research conducted by Lieberman et al. (1973) indicates that ineffective group leaders are characterized as aggressive, authoritarian, pressure oriented, disrespectful of the members, confrontational, egocentric, inappropriately self-disclosing, and poorly timed interveners.

In short, to be an effective group counsellor, counsellor trainees should possess personality traits of people oriented where they are comfortable to be with and around other people, caring, flexible, open to other experience, self-reflective, have sense of humor, and possess good interpersonal skills.

2.2.2 Islamic Perspective on Leadership

In Islam, the definition of leadership does not constitute meaning derived from human experience. Islam views every man as the *khalifah* being born with certain responsibilities to his Creator and to himself. The Qur'an defines the status of humans as twofold, one as a servant of Allah and another as His vicegerent.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

And, I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me (Adh-Dhariyat, 51:56)

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." (Al-Baqarah, 2:30)

From the Islamic perspective, leadership is a function exercised by almost everybody each in his or her own sphere. The Prophet Muhammad taught that everybody is responsible and that everybody is accountable for what he does with his life (Mizan Adiliah, Wan Mohd Fazrul, & Hanit, 2011; Zafar Bangash, 2000). Since everybody has some leadership roles, each one can become a more effective leader by formal training or gaining experience on the job.

Some of the leadership functions that should be performed by a group counsellor include the following: setting and communicating visions, goals, and objectives; directing, coordinating, and integrating; influencing, mobilizing, motivating, creating enthusiasm

and optimism; providing services and making a difference (Mizan Adiliah, et al., 2011; Zafar Bangash, 2000). The leader cannot compel followers to do evil.

Beekun and Badawi (1999) share their observation of how the Qur'an defines leadership based on four characteristics: godliness, ethic, humaneness, and balance. It is godly because it derives its authority from Allah and its end is Allah. It reflects the Islamic creed. It is ethical because it places ethics at the core of its system and never gives priority of economic gains over values. Leader's focus is conducting good deeds to gain Allah's acceptance (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). It is humane because it recognizes the reality of human nature and deals with it as it is. It is constructed to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of human qualities. It is balanced because it acknowledges the body and soul, the mind and the heart, the life and the hereafter.

Leadership in Islam is a trust (*amanah*). According to Beekun and Badawi (1999), it represents a psychological contract between two parties, namely, a leader and his followers, whereby the leader undertakes the guidance, protection, and just treatment of the follower. Islam views leadership as a responsibility and is shared by all adults in a Muslim society. It is pointed clearly by Prophet Muhammad in one of the *hadiths*, "Every one of you is a shepherd and everyone is responsible for what he is shepherd of" (Bukhari & Muslim, in Beekun & Badawi, 1999). In other words, counsellors who are entrusted to lead a group of individuals to make positive changes in their life are bound by a social and psychological contract to guide the members towards their goals.

Islam looks at leadership as a test for the leaders to see who among them will be best in deeds and do more good deeds. Nayal Rashed (2007) identifies three concepts related to

leadership namely, consultation, competency, and *taqwa*. According to him, these three concepts are the recurring concepts in the Qur'an associated with Prophets and should be practiced by counsellors. For example, *taqwa* is mentioned 257 times in the Qur'an. These concepts are linked to leadership concepts such could be found in the story of Prophet Musa, Yusuf, and Talut, and in the verses revealed after the battle of Uhud. Other concepts that also encompass leadership concepts include integrity, patience, forgiveness, and role model.

How the leadership role is being performed in group counselling is of importance. One of the means used by Islamic group leaders is consultation or *Alshura*. It is considered one of the principles in Islamic leadership. Some Muslim scholars have declared that if a leader does not practice consultation he shall not continue to lead and that consultation is an essential part of leadership (Gholamreza Zandi, Mohamed Sulaiman, Babar Naysary, & Nayal Rashed, 2013). Consultation is considered a mean to discuss problem solving by giving the opportunity or looking at a problem from different perspective. Al-Buraey, as cited in Beekum and Badawi (1999), points out the critical role played by *shura* with regard to decision-making, especially in restraining the counsellor's power and authority. Consultation or facilitating discussion has been in practice within group counselling and counsellors rely on it to stimulate discussion among group members. During discussion or consultation, people regardless of their status are treated equally and are given equal chance to share. This behaviour is supported by verses from the Qur'an where Allah praises Muslims who consult with others before making the final decision.

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ

بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

And, those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend (Al-Shura, 42:38)

Discussing or consulting others has been practiced by the prophet Muhammad all his life. For example, he consulted his followers before going to the battles. Prophet Muhammad used to ask his companions for their suggestions in most of the issues including personal matters as long as he did not receive *wahy* on the issue. The Qur'an also describes how the Yemeni Queen of Sheeba used to consult her staff before she made up her mind over the state affair.

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا أَفْتُونِ فِيْ أَمْرِىْ مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّىٰ تَشْهَدُوْا ۚ ﴿٣٢﴾

She said, "O eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I would not decide a matter until you witness [for] me." (An-Naml, 27:32)

The concept of leadership is also mentioned in Hadith. One of the popular hadiths on leadership is reported by Abdullah Ibn Omar in Bukhari and Muslim. The hadith views leadership with respect and stresses that everyone is a leader and is accountable to his or her domain.

عَنْ وَلَدِ مَسْدُودٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ كُلُّكُمْ يَقُولُ وَسَلَّمْ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ رَسُوْلٌ سَمِعْتُ يَقُوْلُ عُمَرُ بْنُ الْوَلَدِ أَنَّ رَاعِيَةً وَالْمَرْأَةَ رَاعِيَتُهُ عَنْ مَسْنُوْلٍ وَهُوَ أَهْلُهُ فِي رَاعٍ وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعِيَتُهُ عَنْ مَسْنُوْلٍ رَاعٍ الْإِمَامُ رَاعِيَتُهُ

أَنْ وَحَسِبْتُ قَالَ رَعِيَّتِهِ عَنْ وَلِّ وَمَسْئُودُ سَيِّدِهِ مَالٍ فِي رَاعٍ وَالْخَادِمُ رَعِيَّتَهَا عَنْ وَمَسْئُودُهُ زَوْجَهَا بَيْتٍ فِي رَعِيَّتِهِ عَنْ وَمَسْئُودُ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ رَعِيَّتِهِ عَنْ وَمَسْئُودُ أَبِيهِ مَالٍ فِي رَاعٍ وَالرَّجُلُ قَالَ قَدْ

Behold! Everyone of you is a leader and you shall be asked about those you lead. Imam is a leader over the people and shall be asked about them; a man is a leader of the house and shall be asked about his household; a woman is a leader over her children and she shall be asked about them." (Reported Abdullah Ibn Omar in Bukhari and Muslim).

The effectiveness of group leadership depends on the personality and characteristics of the counsellor as well as the quality of group members. The Prophet as mentioned in the Qur'an has personal qualities of being lenient, mercy, forgive, and trust in Allah (Al-Quran 3:159). Other personal attributes one should possess is *taqwa* or the fear of the accountability in the hereafter, knowledgeable, and wisdom. According to Zafar Bangash (2000), a leader should hold personal attribute of being *taqwa* and has the ability to motivate others towards the realization of specific goals or objectives. Inherent in this is also the assumption that his leadership is accepted by the people. Counsellors with wisdom or *hikmah* understand the specific thinking and situation of individuals and deal with them at their level. They know how to perform with the best abilities and talents and deal with the difficulties, and make an appropriate strategy. A counsellor should have the ability to motivate and provide some structure to the group when necessary. On the other hand, Islamic teaching highlights some of the characteristics that are not suitable for a counsellor. These include pride, arrogance, notoriety, imbalance in thoughts and actions, narrow mindedness, insistence upon one's opinion, condemn other's viewpoint, and intolerance to others opinion (Mizan Adiliah, et al., 2011; Nayal Rashed, 2007).

Islam considers human skills as important to effective leadership. An effective counsellor is able to tap into the potential of each individual member and believes that individuals are unique and have God-given talents and potentials to make them productive and useful contributors to the group. The role of the counsellor is not only to demonstrate his own qualities but also to bring out the best in those whom he leads (Zafar Bangash, 2000). Good and effective counsellors have a firm belief in people. Good counsellors have compassion and empathy. They are lenient and forgiving. They protect the members from both physical and emotional hurt. In a symbolic way, a counsellor is a role model for the members to emulate and has to be careful about his image and behaviour because all these may reflect on the group norms.

Another component of leadership, which is considered quite important is competency of the counsellor. Competency refers to knowledge, experience, technical, or physical strength (Ibn-katheer, 2000; Nayal Rashed, 2007) or the capabilities of the counsellor to perform in a situation or event (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). Gholamreza Zandi, et al. (2013) consider competency as an important factor influencing leadership in Islamic thinking. Competency is the first characteristics used in choosing the Imam (leader) who leads the *solat* (prayers), the second pillar of Islam. The imam should be the most knowledgeable person among those present. In Islamic teachings, this refers specifically to knowledge of Qur'an because to perform the prayers Qur'an should be recited. Therefore, competency in Islamic thinking is an essential element in counsellors' effectiveness. However, it is not a fixed set of specific requirements, as Zafar Bangash (2000) says, is rather a situational matter depending on the task needed to be accomplished.

One popular group type used frequently in Islamic teaching is called halaqah or *usrah*, which is similar to psycho-educational group or study group or support group (Al-Banna, 2003). In searching for a leader of the group, knowledge becomes the key determinant. In group counselling, the members are willing to follow a counsellor whom they consider competent and knows what he is doing, especially in guiding them towards their goals.

There are some similarities and differences between the Western and the Islamic perception of leadership. In both the Western and the Islamic perspectives, counsellors should be knowledgeable, patience, people-oriented, responsible, and trusting. In term of performing their duty as counsellors, the Western supports the Islamic perceptive that they should be able to set and communicate the group objectives, direct, integrate, influence, mobilize, and motivate the members to make progress in their life. The Islamic scholars prefer to be different in term of where counsellors actual responsibility lies. Islam inculcates in counsellors to be responsible to his Creator first and then to their group compared to the Western approach that counsellors are responsible to the group members only. In this situation, the Islamic counsellors will act responsibly because they know they will be judged by Him in the hereafter for the deeds and misconducts towards their group members.

One factor that is strongly stressed by the Western and the Islamic perspective is the need for counsellors to be the role model. Cormier and Hackney (2008) believe that counsellors should act in responsible ways that show respect, care, honesty, and willingness to take risk. This requirement of counsellors to model is of importance in Islam, and there is a slight difference in how the model character is molded. Rogers

(1961) concludes that counsellor's personality and acceptance of himself make him a good model to his group. Corey (2010) and Trotzer (2006) suggest that counsellors should always strive to improve themselves in term of knowledge and skills. Islam takes the responsibility a step further by making it a personal responsibility of counsellors to behave in the ways they want the members to act. The counsellors have to adopt good characters as part of their life (Mizan Adiliah, et al., 2011). There is no double standard in behaving, meaning that counsellors should portray good behaviours inside and outside the group.

Another character of an effective counsellor is continuous effort to upgrade his professionalism. From the Western perspective, counsellors can achieve this by seeking higher academic qualifications, readings, attending seminars and workshops. The Islamic approach refines this attitude by encouraging counsellors to engage in the *muhasabah* or self-reflection activity. This activity combines the self-meditation and self-reflection activities. Through the *muhasabah* process, counsellors scrutinize their wrongdoings, new learnings, and finding ways to better themselves. During the process, they feel closer to their Creator as they ask for His guidance and forgiveness. To enhance this process, feeling of *taqwa* will make them behave accountably to their groups.

To conclude the discussion on group leadership, the literature shows that much writings have focused on leadership in general and in understanding counsellors' characteristics. Very little is known about Malaysian's perspective of group leadership concept in group counselling. Is the perspective at par with the Western perception of group leadership or whether Malaysia, given its multiracial and multi religions build up, needs to develop its

own concept of group leadership which is more relevant to the needs of the society? The present study seeks to explore the counsellor trainees' perceptions of group leadership in group counselling and how these functions are being translated into actions to guide members to achieve their group objectives.

2.3 Conflict Management in Group Counselling

2.3.1 Definitions of Conflict

There exist many definitions of conflict. Kottler (2001) defines conflicts as tension and disagreement within a person or between two or more people who get together. Corey (2011) says conflicts involve intense feelings. Folger, et al. (2009) observe conflict as the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving their goals, and in the process conflicts create tension within the individuals involved. Ting-Toomey (1988) defines conflict as "a form of intense interpersonal and/ or intrapersonal dissonance between two or more interdependent parties based on incompatible goals, needs, desires, values, beliefs/ or attitudes" (p. 72). Gerzon (2006) divides conflicts into two types, hot and cold conflicts. Hot conflicts involve strong emotions, loud voices, and visible tension, while cold conflicts is portrayed through suppressed emotions, tense silence, and invisible stress. Both types of conflicts have destructive consequences if handled poorly. In short, most definitions of conflict emphasize the role of perception in conflict, incompatibility in needs or values, and negative emotions. Conflicts are more serious than mere disagreements or differences of opinions because during conflicts people believe that their interests are threatened by the actions of the other person. People in conflict tend to experience misunderstanding

that exaggerates the perceived disagreement (Ting-Toomey, 1985). Conflicts occur when people perceive that as a consequence of a disagreement, there is a threat to their needs, interests, or concerns.

Conflict as part of group process fulfills several functions or purposes. The purposes of conflict may be to bring about positive change, but if conflict is mismanaged, it may result in negative consequences. Lulofs and Cahn (2000) identify five functions of conflict. First, conflict helps people find the boundaries of their relationship with other members in the group, or they may mark the end of an existing relationship. Second, conflict from an external source may strengthen the cohesiveness of a group or it may destroy a group's ability to think clearly and adapt productively to the situation. Third, conflict may help the group clarify its goals or it may tear the group apart. Fourth, conflict facilitates trust building among group members or it keeps them apart. And, finally, the experience of being in conflict builds empathy because members begin to understand the feelings experienced by others in similar situations. According to Lulofs and Cahn (2000), conflict involves opportunity as well as risks and the trainees' actions determine how the conflict will be managed.

2.3.2 Models of Conflict

As a process, conflict refers to the dynamic, ever changing progressive event. It means conflict grows, develops, and progresses towards some end. It is assumed that conflict unfolds in fairly predictable ways over a period of time and progress through recognizable stages of interaction. Walton (1987) identifies two stages in the conflict process – differentiation and integration. Ellis and Fisher (1975) add another phase based

on their observation of conflict during decision making in small groups. In the research, small groups first engaged in conflict over the differences among the members themselves rather than over the issues the group had generated. In the second phase, interaction centers around the advantages and disadvantages of the idea. Then in the third stage, members look for ways to agree with the outcome as the conflict de-escalates.

Furthermore, Thomas (1976) suggests a process model of interpersonal conflict that moves through a series of five recognizable stages or phases. This model is also applicable within a group counselling setting where members have intense interpersonal relationship with each other. These stages are the prelude to conflict, the triggering event or the behaviour phase, the initiation phase, the differentiation, and the resolution phase. Conflicts may follow this sequence of events quickly or slowly (Thomas, 1976). A conflict may begin to circle through the phases and stop, or it may return to previous stage when new issues are introduced and added to the conflict. From this stage perspective, an unsuccessful conflict is one that becomes stuck in one of the first three stages.

The prelude stage consists of the variables that make conflict possible between those involved. The variables may include the group members as the participants in the conflict situation, the relationship between them, and the group context itself. The group members involved in the conflict have the greatest influence on whether a conflict will arise and on how it will be played out. Differences in the group members' temperaments, attitudes, and value are the potential for conflicts to occur in group (Cloven & Roloff, 1995; Roloff & Miller, 2006). The relationship between members affects the way they perceive and

react to conflict. Conflict in a new relationship may be threatening because of high levels of uncertainty. If group members have had personal experience engaging in unsatisfactory conflict prior to their participation in the group, they may expect the current conflict to be difficult, thus polluting the conflict situation by bringing in the unresolved issues from the past (Lulofs & Cahn, 2000). Finally, the social context where the conflict occurs determines how the conflict is acted out. Group that thinks of conflict as normal probably reacts to it in a fairly open manner compared to group that thinks of it as abnormal (Roloff & Miller, 2006).

The triggering event phase refers to certain behaviour that creates the perception of conflict within the group. The triggering event, as described by Lulofs and Cahn (2000), is perceived when the member experiencing the conflict observes one of the following behaviours in other group members: (1) group members fail to perform as expected, (2) group member imposes his or her wants, needs, desires, or demands on other member of the group, (3) group members criticize or find fault with what another member is doing or saying or feeling, (4) group members realize they held different attitudes, lifestyle, and opinion between them and realize that it occurs more than once, and (5) group members mutually or interactively involve in creating cumulative annoyance between them. Witteman (1992) identifies five situational variables that affect the way people assess the presence and severity of conflict before deciding on the appropriate action to manage the situation. The variables include: the frequency of the issue being raised, the degree to which members believe the leader and other group members will allow them to achieve their goals, the uncertainty associated with achieving goals, the degree to which they

believe the other is responsible for the conflict, and the degree of negative feelings held towards the other.

The initiation of conflict begins when at least one member of the group including the counsellor observes a triggering event. The counsellor would normally assess the event to determine who is involved in the conflict, or how the issue is tied to other group members, and how serious the issue is. Given the assessment of the issue and the time and opportunity to reflect, the counsellor then chooses to confront or avoid the conflict. Even though conflict is necessary to clarify issues, it is feared because of the feelings of vulnerability and frustration it can arouse (Folger, et al., 2009). When conflict is feared and seen as something to be ignored, then the counsellor may decide to avoid it. The initiation stage involves mental processing where the counsellor cognitively processes the situation to determine whether he or she should confront the group members, avoid the issue, or take other actions. When the counsellor or any of the group members initiates communication about the conflict, it moves into the differentiation stage.

The differentiation stage happens when group members reveal their differences and call attention to the fact that conflict exists. At this stage, conflict is made obvious, and members may decide to openly disagree, argue, strongly state their point of views on the issue, or totally withdraw from dealing with the situation. The relationship, the conflict history of the group members, and their preferred conflict styles all affect how the conflict escalates and how the others view the escalation behaviour (Lulofs & Cahn, 2000). Folger, et al. (2009) observe that the most successful conflict resolution occurs when the group focuses on substantive issues rather than on the people involved. But

differentiation can be so stressful that sometimes leaders will simply cling to rigid behaviours that may have served them in the past but do not serve them well in the present (Brown, 2009; Folger, et al., 2009). Roloff and Miller (2006) identify several sources of rigidity in a conflict: personalization of the conflict, stress of acknowledging opposing stands or emotional statements, uncertainty about the outcomes of conflict, and the heightened awareness of the consequences of not reaching a conclusion. All these sources of rigidity may create a competitive escalation cycle, when group members enter the conflict with a win-lose orientation, create threats to the other person's self-image, and suppress issues rather than resolving them. Lulofs and Cahn (2000) find that conflict focuses on behaviours are more likely to lead to conflict resolution or management than complaints focused on personal characteristics.

Throughout the differentiation phase, the group may undergo goal revisions as they examine whether the objectives they had for joining the group in the first place are still fruitful to pursue. If the conflict has to do with group structures or group norms, employing new norms or eliminating irrelevant rules may deescalate the conflict (Corey, 2010). As the group starts to search for solutions, and once solutions are the focus of discussion, the conflict moves into the resolution stage.

The resolution of conflict stage involves two orientations: resolution where the conflict is resolved and the group will not have to deal with the issue again, and management where the issue has been dealt with for now but is not really to the satisfaction of all group members involved and will probably have to be addressed again in the future (Brown, 2009). When members are able to bring their conflicts to a successful resolution, it

reinforces positive thinking about conflict, and increases the chances that future conflicts will be productive for the group growth (Lulofs & Cahn, 2000; Thomas, 1976). An open attitude towards the management of conflict makes the future management of it more possible and welcome by the group.

Phase models suggest that conflicts have triggering events, actions seen by the members as initiating the conflict and bringing it to their attention. Phase models indicate that conflicts often involve a testing period before they are enacted, during which the leader and the members assess their strengths and weaknesses and try to determine conflict outcomes before taking any action. Phase models focus on conflict as interaction over time, as something that unfolds when people interact with one another. On the other hand, Lulofs and Cahn (2000) and Thomas (1976) observe that conflicts that arise suddenly and are dealt with immediately may give those involved no real chance to think about what they will do to bring the conflict under control. If this happens in the group, group members may lose the chance to understand the different phases of conflict development; and, they may be unable to explore their roles in triggering the conflict. Not only that conflict evolves through stages, but the way it is dealt with differs between individuals.

2.3.3 Conflict Styles

The concept of conflict styles originates from the work of Blake and Mouton (1964), who identify five distinct types of conflict behaviour. Their classification is based on two independent conflict behaviour components: (i) assertiveness, defined as behaviours intended to satisfy one's own concerns; and (ii) cooperation, defined as behaviours

intended to satisfy the other individual's concerns. The dual model is later refined through Kilmann and Thomas's MODE (1977) instrument. This approach focuses on five classic styles or predisposition for managing conflict. The five conflict styles include competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, and compromising. Thomas and Kilmann (1974) describe the conflict management styles as follows: (i) competing- occurs when individuals pursue their own concerns at other people's expense; (ii) accommodating- happens when individuals neglect their own concerns to satisfy the concerns of other party or the group objectives; (iii) collaborating – occurs when individuals work with other party in the group to find solutions that can satisfy their concerns; (iv) avoiding –is seen when individuals do not immediately pursue their concerns or those of the group; and (v) compromising –occurs when group counsellor attempt to find a mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies his/her needs. By altering their style of conflict management, group counsellor may increase their flexibility and the probability that the conflicts they have with other members will have a more positive than negative outcome (Mitchell & Mitchell, 1984).

Similar to Kilmann and Thomas's (1977) 5-type conflict styles is the five specific techniques for managing conflicts in groups proposed by Simpson (1977) and elaborated by Kormanski (1982). The techniques share more similarities than differences with each other. The techniques include withdrawal from the conflict, suppressing the conflict, integrating conflicting ideas to form new solutions, working out a compromise, and using power to resolve the conflict. In withdrawal from the conflict technique, the counsellors distance themselves from conflict and postpone interventions. Suppressing conflict is often used when focusing on a relationship that is more important than concentrating on

an issue. In integrating conflicting ideas to form new solutions, counsellors try to get all parties to reexamine a situation and identify points of agreement by setting aside their own goals and work for the good of the group. Counsellors using the compromise technique encourage the group members to exhibit cooperative behaviour and collaborative effort by persuading them to give up certain expectations in order to avoid conflict. The last technique is the counsellors using their authority power to resolve the conflict.

Sillars (1980) discovers that people who attribute responsibility for the conflict to the other person are far more likely to use avoidance or competitive strategies and far less likely to use integrative or collaborative strategies. On the other hand, when people accept responsibility for their thoughts and actions, they are far more likely to shift from blaming to information seeking in order to resolve or manage the conflict. Moreover, they are far more likely to accept change they have to make to bring about conflict resolution. Some studies indicate that women rather than men are more likely to employ strategies that focus on reasoning and understanding and are more likely to internalize the conflict. Women, compared to men, are also more likely to use personal criticism and anger strategies, whereas males are more likely to use denial tactics. Pinkley and Northcraft (1994) focus on framing during conflict stimulation find out that those who adopt an intellectual rather than emotional frame and relational rather than task frame feel that the dispute have been good for the relationship, and those with an intellectual rather than emotional frame are more satisfied with the outcome of the conflict.

Within the Malaysia context, conflict styles has received much interest in the human resource area. A study conducted by Abd Harris Mohd Darudin and Norwati Mansor (2011) look at the conflict resolution styles among personnel in the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperative and Consumerism. The participants are 100 (male = 51, female= 49) conveniently selected personnel from the support staff to the top management personnel. The measurement tool is Adult Personal Conflict Style Inventory that uses two axes called “assertiveness” and “cooperativeness”, and five different styles of conflict: forcing, avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, and compromising. The conflict styles are similar to Thomas-Kilmann Inventory (1974) which identifies five styles of conflict management. The study looks at the conflict resolution styles among the personnel when the conflicts first arise, and when conflicts have been unresolved and grown in intensity.

The findings show that when the conflicts first arise, the personnel tend to adopt the collaborating or a win/win approach (56%), followed by the accommodating (16%), compromising (13%), avoiding (10%), and forcing (5%). But, when conflicts fail to be resolved and grow in intensity, different styles of conflict resolution become more popular. About 31% of the participants choose the compromising style, meaning that the officers try to find solution that would partially satisfy everyone. The second style adopted is collaborating (28%), followed by forcing (26%), accommodating (11%), and avoiding (11%). The result of the independent t-test shows there is no significant difference in scores between males and females in the conflict styles they adopt to deal with conflicts the first time they arise (male: $M= 2.20$, $SD= 1.54$) and (female: $M= 1.96$, $SD= 1.43$) ($t(98) = 0.80$, $p > 0.05$). There is no significant difference in scores between

males and females in the conflict styles they use to deal with the unresolved conflicts (male: $M= 3.1$, $SD= 1.54$) and (female: $M= 2.88$, $SD= 1.65$) ($t(98) = 0.69$, $p > 0.05$).

Even though the findings indicate no gender differences in conflict styles, the researchers notice that when conflicts first arise, both genders tend to choose collaborating style. However, when conflicts are not resolved, female respondents incline to choose collaborating, while male respondents opt to compromising style. These results support the findings on female conflict by Brahnem, Margavio, Hignite, Barrier, and Chin (2005) who observe that females are more likely to employ a collaborative style, whereas males are more likely to avoid conflict.

In their study, Abd Harris Mohd Darudin and Norwati Mansor (2011) highlight the conflict styles employed by the different personnel in dealing with conflicts. They do not explore the kind of conflict management skills used by the personnel. Identifying the conflict styles by themselves is not enough to guide the personnel into improving their conflict management skills. One's conflict style is influenced by one's past experience dealing with conflicts and by cultural perceptions of conflicts (Kottler, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 1988), thus it is difficult to change or modify the conflict style. But by identifying the kinds of conflict management skills the personnel lack, more constructive approach to conflict can be taught and more positive outcomes can be observed in their conflict management.

Recently, Suppiah (2006) conducts an empirical study among public sector managers in Malaysia to determine the conflict management styles they use to handle interpersonal conflicts with their subordinates. She reports that a high percentage (65.5%) of the

managers use integrating style to handle interpersonal conflicts with their subordinates followed by the compromising style (23.8%). An insignificant percentage is the dominating style (5.0%), the avoiding style (4.2%), and the obliging style (1.5%).

In her study, Suppiah (2006) learns that obliging to be the least used style followed by avoiding and dominating. The low usage of the obliging style among the Malaysia managers is assumed to be related to their power position in the work setting. They would not be able to achieve their goals if they give in to their subordinate's wishes in the work environment (Suppiah, 2006). Managers might feel that since they are in a superior position, they do not need to oblige to their subordinates who are in the lower position. Within the Malaysian culture, people are generally able to accept that inequality in power is normal and that the subordinates must show respect to the superordinate.

Suppiah (2006) findings are in line with Abdullah Ahmad's (1996) and Ishak Sulaiman's (1997) opinion that Malaysians dislike aggressive behaviour, prefer more relationship-based approaches and choose consensus and compromise than confrontation. As such, the integrating style and compromising style fit into this category. The findings also support Ting-Toomey's (1988) face negotiation theory where she states that in collectivist culture, mutual-concern face needs (integrating style and compromising style) or other-concern face needs (avoiding style and obliging style) are emphasized. She discovers that the majority (89.3%) of the respondents display mutual-face concern styles which include the integrating style and the compromising style while 5.7% displays other-concern face styles (avoiding style and obliging style). An insignificant number (5.0%) of respondents show a self-concern face style (dominating style). Cai and Fink (2002) also find that

those from collectivists society preferred the compromising and the integrating conflict styles.

2.3.4 Conflict, Emotions, and Cognition

Conflict triggers certain emotions and thoughts in parties involved in the conflict. This section focuses on previous research conducted to understand the roles emotions and cognitions play during conflict situation.

Several studies have explored the influence of emotions on conflict management. Chuang, Wang, Kung, and Wang (2011) study the effect of emotions on conflict management approaches. About 110 undergraduate students (78 women and 32 male, mean age 30 years) participate in the study. To manipulate the participants' emotional state, they are asked to watch an either happy or sad film. Sixty participants are assigned to the positive valence condition where they watch happy videotape, whereas the others in the negative valence condition watch sad videotape. The results show that participants with positive emotional state have a significant positive effect on cooperative approach, whereas negative emotional state has a significant effect on competitive or avoiding approach. The results reveal that different emotional states are triggered for different approaches to managing conflict. The happier and consideration participants felt for each other during conflict, the more willing they are to work with each other. When participants specifically feel happier, they feel more likely to have an open discussion of differences that in turn, help achieve constructive conflict management. On the other hand, participants who are unhappy prefer competitive or avoiding approach and have less desire to cooperate with each other.

This findings by Chuang, et al. (2011) are supported by Desivilya and Yagil (2004) and Allred, Mallozzi, Matsui, and Raia (1997) who observe that the more negative emotions participants felt towards each other, the less likely they are to work with each other in the future. These participants are more likely to engage in competitive approach. Ayoko, Hartel, and Callan (2002) also agree that one's emotional state served as a central role in his/her conflict management. Ayoko, et al. (2002) perceive that positive emotions facilitate open discussion of differences and encourage parties to engage in constructive conflict management. In term of face-saving concerns, Chuang, et al. (2011), findings support Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2003) that participants who have other-face concerns are inclined to use cooperative or avoiding approach, whereas those who have self-face concerns incline to use competitive approach. To conclude, several studies have shown that positive emotions lead to more constructive conflict management while negative emotion worsen conflict management.

Conflict management can also be explored through one's cognition or how one makes sense of other people and themselves during conflict situation. Roloff and Miller (2006) learn that people often engage in thinking about the causes and solutions for their conflicts, and the nature of this cognitive activity can influence the future course and consequences of their disagreements.

One area of social cognition that has received much attention is cognitive scripts. Script refers to a sequence of actions that describes an event in a particular context. This script includes the kinds of verbal and nonverbal actions that typically take place during a disagreement, as well as the gender of the individuals involved in the argument. Harris,

Gergen, and Lannamann (1986) study the response sequences that college students expect when a difference of opinion occurs between two male friends and when a husband criticizes his wife's cooking. Regardless of the scenario, the data indicate that as a conflict unfolds, individuals generally see aggressive options as being more probable and deniable.

In another study, Fehr, Baldwin, Collins, Patterson, and Benditt (1999) focus on anger scripts in close relationships. They ask their subjects to indicate how angry they would be if their intimate partners engage in one of several provocative actions, their responses to the provocations, and how their partners would respond to their reactions. Betrayal is the most anger-eliciting provocation, and women report finding provocations of all types to be more anger producing than do men. Both men and women expect anger to be reciprocated by the partner. Fehr, et al. (1999) believe that the scripts construct offer practical insight into how people in conflict deal with disagreements. Since individuals seem to have destructive expectations for how a disagreement should occur, it is possible that these become self-fulfilling. In other words, the expectation of such behaviour ensures that it will happen.

Furthermore, how one chooses a conflict style is influenced by one's appraisal of the situation. Wittenman (1988) argues that a person's appraisal of conflict reflect five judgments: (a) how a problem compares to previously experienced ones, (b) the nature of a problem-related goal, (c) uncertainty about problem-related goal, (d) attribution of the cause for the problem, and (e) feelings for the other party. To test his hypotheses, Wittenman (1988) conducts two studies with undergraduate samples, one that focuses on

actual interpersonal problems, and a second that uses a hypothetical interpersonal problem. The results are similar. The use of integrative strategies (e.g., expressing feelings) relates positively to three perceptions: the problem is unique, the goal is important and mutually shared, and the environment causes the problem. Distributive communication (e.g., insulting or threatening the partner) is related positively to negative feelings towards the partner, perceptions that the problem occurs frequently, and perceptions that the partner's actions cause the problem and are intended. Appraising the problem indirectly (e.g., waiting to confront the person until he or she is in a good mood) is correlated positively to feeling uncertain about the partner and relationship, having negative feelings towards the partner, and attributing the cause of the problem to the relationship or the partner. Finally, avoidant responses are prompted by attributing the cause to the relationship, uncertainty about the partner and relationship, and being uncertain about what to do. Using a controlling style is correlated positively to attributing the cause of the conflict to the partner and having negative feelings towards him or her. Having a withdrawing style is related positively to uncertainty about what to do.

Similarly, Roloff and Miller (2006) agree that problem appraisal as engaged by parties in conflict influences their constructive and destructive conflict behaviours. When individuals notice that an action falls outside the range of those that are expected, cognitive arousal results as the individuals attempt to make sense of the situation. More approaches that are positive flow from perceiving shared goals, whereas withdrawal is correlated positively with not knowing what to do. Event that increases uncertainty can stimulate feelings of sadness and anger as well as a desire to seek information from partners about the event (Knobloch & Solomon, 2003).

Furthermore, Fletcher, Thomas, and Durrant (1999) focus their research on accommodation process during a conflict. They distinguish between cognitive and behavioural accommodation. Cognitive accommodation involves reinterpreting or re-labeling a partner's negative behaviour so it is more benign. In other words, it involves rationalizing the behaviour so it is not damaging or distressing. Behavioural accommodation involves the degree to which a person avoids expressing negative reaction to the partner about his/her behaviour. In this case, the person is withholding his/her thoughts rather than voicing them. Fletcher, et al. (1999) ask a group of individuals about their negative thoughts about an instance of their partner's negative behaviour and then code the degree to which the thoughts are expressed during a confrontation. The higher the quality of their relationship (love, satisfaction, commitment) is, the less likely that individuals accommodate their partners by withholding their thoughts. This research also shows that commitment is related positively to accommodation. Individuals who are highly committed to their relationship are thought to consider broader issues to a greater extent than those who are less committed (Campbell & Foster, 2002).

Based on the findings of cognitive structures formed by parties involved in a conflict, the key to resolving the conflict is to maintain commitment to a relationship through accommodative responses (Campbell & Foster, 2002; Fletcher, et al., 1999). Kilpatrick, Bissonnette, and Rusbult (2002) discover that in some cases, a person's accommodative responses are related to how empathic the partner is. When this happen, the individuals will shift their initial preference for self-oriented to other-oriented to what is perceived to be good for the relationship. Corey (2010) who stresses the importance of group leaders

establishing quality and committed relationship in a group has made similar suggestion. This feeling of commitment to the group will promote trust that is useful in protecting the group during its challenging times.

In another study, a link has been established between thinking about conflict and its influence on the conflict outcomes. There is evidence that shows prolonged thinking about conflict is associated with negative outcomes. Johnson and Roloff (1998) find the degree to which individuals mull over a conflict is correlated negatively with being optimistic that it could be resolved. Zagacki, Edwards, and Honeycutt (1992) require individuals to construct an imagined interaction with their partners and conclude that those who imagine conflicts report that they do not find the experience to be satisfying.

Several researchers have focused on self-control processes, in particular to emotional control. Disagreement can be emotionally arousing and individuals often try to maintain emotional control during a conversation. Richards, Butler, and Gross (2003) examine how individuals control their emotions during conflict. They find two ways of doing that. First, prior to the onset of a conflict discussion, individuals might engage in cognitive reappraisal wherein they focus on positive aspects of their partner and relationship. This action would make the conflict seem less aversive. Alternatively, individuals would engage in expressive suppression during the interaction by controlling their emotional displays. Richards, et al. (2003) discover that individuals who use suppression during a disagreement have better recall of conversational content than those who use emotional suppression. However, those who suppress emotions have better recall of their emotions, primarily due to their greater self-monitoring. In effect, suppression distracts individuals

from processing on what is said while focusing attention on internal states. This finding is supported by the research conducted by Butler, Egloff, Wilhelm, Smith, Erickson, and Gross (2003). They learn that during a discussion of an unpleasant event, the blood pressure of both interactants increases and they develop less rapport and affiliation with one another.

To conclude the discussion on conflict, emotions, and cognition, it is undeniable that conflict stimulates emotional responses and cognitive activity aimed at making sense of the conflict. Individuals experiencing negative emotions during a conflict tend to resort to either competitive or avoiding approach. Those who are happier are more likely to engage in open discussion and to strive for constructive conflict management. In term of the relationship between conflict and cognition, several cognitive processes have found to be related to conflict outcomes. One's appraisal of the situation, conflict scripts, thinking about conflict, accommodation processes, commitment, and self-control are shown to have positive and negative influences on one's reaction during conflict. Roloff and Miller (2006) argue that people do not always process their conflicts or arguments in the same manner. Some individuals may be more aware of conflict dynamics than are others. Relating these findings to group counselling, Brown (2009) notices that some counsellor trainees are aware of the small changes in the members' behaviour but some trainees may ignore the behaviour and emotional indications until the whole group falls into silence. Hence, some counsellor trainees may not even agree on whether conflict has happened in their group. Although such discrepancies could be self-serving, they could also result from differential awareness.

The search for literature on conflict in group counselling shows that not much is known about the dynamics of conflict in group. Group researchers have to rely on researches conducted in other fields like interpersonal relationship, marriage, and communication to help them understand conflicts in group counselling. Even though these researches do contribute to better understanding of conflict situations, they do not directly reflect the uniqueness of group counselling, in particular the relationship established between group members and counsellors. The counselling field still lacks information on how conflict affects group counsellors in term of emotion, cognition, and action. What are the conflict scripts the counsellors engaged in prior to and during the conflict episode? How do these conflict scripts differ between counsellor trainees and professional counsellors? How do their assessments of the situation influence their conflict management?

The exploration of past research shows that it still lacks integration of cross-cultural approach with emotions and social cognition perspectives on conflict management. This lack of integration conveys the message that majority of individuals regardless of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds think, feel, and act in similar ways. Without proper investigation, researchers may assume that cultural differences are not relevant or they may simply generalize the findings rather than test specific group differences. Even though Chuang, et al. (2011), Oetzel, et al. (2003), and Ting-Toomey, et al. (2001) are looking into the matter to understand cultural influence on different group and individual conflict styles, not much is done to explore the effects of culture on group counsellors' conflict styles and conflict management behaviours. The present study hopes to be able to explore some of the questions posted here and to gain some insight on Malaysia counsellor trainees' conflict management strategies.

2.4 Leadership and Conflict Management in Group Counselling

Leadership and conflict are inseparable in group counselling interaction. Most theories of group development identify a stage in groups when conflict is most likely to occur. Kormanski (1982) and Tuckman (1965) suggest that an initial stage of orientation and dependency is followed by a stage of resistance and intergroup conflict. Disagreements and other forms of conflict emerge, and how these are managed is the responsibility of a group counsellor (Brown, 2009).

Conflict creates feelings of discomfort in the group. Yalom and Leszcz (2005) and Mitchell and Mitchell (1984) note that conflict is inevitable in group counselling and group psychotherapy. It can be the long silence, talkative member, denial, and attendance problem (Donigian & Hulse-Killacky, 1998), the suppression of frustration, neglect, lack of direction and attention (Kellermann, 1998). Yalom (1985) realizes that conflict often arises from contempt of others, which is usually a projection of the client's self-contempt. Yalom also lists transferences, mirror reactions, rivalry, differences in outlook based on differing life experiences, anger at members who do not abide by the group norms, and disappointment with the therapist. Group structures and competition for power among the members also can cause conflict (Unger, 1990).

Conflict in group counselling could happen at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group levels. Kellermann (1998) describes the intrapersonal conflict as resulting from personal frustration and aggression towards the group. The interpersonal conflict involves differences in perspectives, ideas, or values between members in the group. And, the group level conflict reflects the negative atmosphere or culture of the group towards the

leader, particular member or idea. Kottler (2001) and Whitaker (2001) also make similar observation that in group counselling, conflict inflicts individual, two or more people, or the whole group. The reasons could reflect the personal issue or temperament, values, or discreet norms of the group.

Pinkley (1990) argues that because of personal experiences, individuals have formed cognitive frames that reflect their impressions of how conflicts differ. This cognitive structure or interpretations of conflict may then guide disputant behaviour, strategy selection, outcome concerns, and evaluation of the other party. Even if those frames are wrong, they still guide behaviour (Folger, et al., 2009). People holding dysfunctional beliefs are more likely to engage in destructive conflict behaviours. While those who reject the dysfunctional beliefs are likely to engage in constructive conflict behaviours like discussion, compromise, seek help from third party, and change the faulty beliefs when necessary.

In addition to the conflict cognitive frames, studies have been conducted to assess how counselor trainees perceive themselves in term of counseling skills. A number of studies examining a variety of skills domains have found that counselor trainees have formed some cognitive images of their abilities to apply counseling skills. More specifically, those with higher self-efficacy set higher goals and have a firmer commitment to those goals as compared to those with lower self-efficacy (Wan Jaafar Wan Marzuki, Othman Mohamed, Abdul Rahim Bakar, & Rohani Ahmad Tarmizi, 2009). Furthermore, those with higher self-efficacy tend to visualize successful outcomes, whereas those with lower

levels of self-efficacy visualize failure scenarios (Larson, Suzuki, Gillespie, Potenza, Bechtel, & Toulouse, 1992).

The strong self-efficacy also impacts the quality of counseling services. Counselor trainees who develop strong sense of their abilities seem to invest more efforts and able to perform the complex and challenging tasks of a counselor (Constantine, 2001), and improvise multiple sub-skills to manage ever-changing counseling circumstances (Larson & Daniels, 1998). Counselor trainees with low counseling self-efficacy perceive themselves as unable to successfully learn counseling knowledge and skills, perform the tasks of a counselor, cope with the challenges involved in counseling clients, and experience various difficulties in cognitive processes and emotional arousal associated with counseling career even though they may have the required knowledge and skills (Bandura, 1977; Larson & Daniels, 1998; Pajares, 1996).

Furthermore, Little, Packman, Smaby, and Maddux (2005) suggest that beginning counselors are poor judges of their counseling abilities. This observation is supported by Kruger and Dunning (1999) and Dunning (2005) who find that the most poorly skilled to be the most likely to overestimate their performance. Two studies by Urbani, et al (2002) and Little, et al (2005) find that counselor trainees tend to overestimate their skills performance prior to skills training and to underestimate, although by a smaller degree, their performance at the end of the training. Described as the dual-burden, Kruger and Dunning (1999) argue that the very skills needed to perform well, are also the skills required to accurately assess one's performance. Thus, Carter and Dunning (2008)

conclude that a counselor may not only have the problem of being poorly skilled but also suffer the secondary burden of lacking the tools necessary to realize such a weakness.

Conflict is often highly perceived with skepticism because it offers a mixture of the good, the bad, and the uncertain. The immediate association with conflict is usually negative. Conflict is associated with intense arguments, disagreements, frustration, hard feelings, aggression, and sometimes more conflicts (Folger, et al., 2009; Mitchell & Mitchell, 1984). Hocker and Wilmot (1985) ask a group of people to respond to the word “conflict.” The responses show that more negative than positive words are being associated with conflict. Some of the associated words include destruction, anger, disagreement, hostility, war, anxiety, tension, alienation, violence, competition, threat, heartache, pain, and hopelessness. People view conflict as a concept which evoke negative images

On the other hand, conflict can bring positive effects to group development as well. Conflict can bring drama, excitement, change, and development to human life (Corey, et al., 2011; Folger, et al., 2009). It helps members re-evaluate and clarify goals and mission for joining the group, and produce new and creative ideas to solve the conflict (Corey, 2010). Group members can, in a variety of ways, benefit from conflict, provided its intensity does not exceed their tolerance, and provided that proper group norms have been established (Yalom, 1985).

Conflict, no matter how mild, is usually present in all groups from the beginning to the termination stage (Brown, 2009). According to Donigian and Hulse-Killacky (1998), conflict can be viewed as part of stage development and also as group process. Conflicts

occur at various stages of group's development and center around a variety of concerns. Several factors have been associated with conflict. Inexperienced leader, poor member screening, loose group structure and norms, unclear members' roles, and mismatched between members' expectations and group objectives (Brown, 2009; Corey, et al., 2010; Gladding, 2012), fear of conflict, expression of emotions, and impending group termination (Brown, 2009). Brown (2006) relates how the leaders' attitude towards conflict may influence their reactions to conflict.

When leaders fear conflict they work hard to ensure that conflict does not emerge in the group, or they ignore conflict, suppress it, and use a wide variety of strategies to keep from having to deal with it. This seldom works because conflicts are a natural part of life, are always present in some form in every group and, when not openly acknowledged and addressed, work on a nonconscious level to negatively affect the group and individual members (p. 323).

If a group has no conflict, it might be a sign of a problem. A group without conflict might be suffering from unhealthy agreement, where a domineering leader suppresses all conflicts and discussion, or the group performs its task in routine manner and not trying to improve how it works (Gladding, 2012; Whitaker, 2006). The complexity and the demanding situation existing during the conflict episode can pose quite a pressure to group counsellors.

Given the fact that conflict typically arises in groups, effective conflict resolution or management is necessary. If not resolved, groups can get stuck or side tracked. Although groups often react spontaneously to conflicts when they occur, counsellors can engage in preemptive conflict management to help manage and reduce the destructive impact of conflicts (Marks, et al., 2001).

Successful conflict negotiation has been identified as a crucial factor for group to move towards phase of productive interaction. In their efforts to understand conflicts in group counselling, Rybak and Brown (1997) explore the potential impact of group counsellor's communication style during conflict episodes and how these patterns relate to group development.

Process research is used to analyze communication styles prior and during conflict episodes of two small groups that met for 12 weeks. Participants for the study consist of group leaders and group members. Group members are graduate students participating in the experiential portion of a master's-level group class at a large Midwestern university. Doctoral students with previous experience in structured group leadership serve as the group leaders. Two instruments are used in the study: The Sequential Analysis of Verbal Interaction (SAVI) and the Hill Interaction Matrix (HIM). Both instruments use trained raters to code interactions heard on audiotaped group sessions. The SAVI tracks verbal behaviours to identify patterns and sequence of verbal behaviours; the HIM tracks overall group development and categories of development. The SAVI framework is built on communication theory that recognizes three general categories of verbal information transfer effectiveness: avoidance behaviours, approach behaviours, and contingent behaviours. The HIM (Hill, 1965) is devised as a system to systematically and empirically analyzed verbal interactions within therapy groups.

The results show that for both groups, members as well as leaders use contingent statements most frequently. Members' pre conflict statements are as follows: Group 1-contingent 55%, avoidance 34%, approach 11%; Group 2-contingent 44%, avoidance

32%, approach 24%. Leaders' pre conflict statements are as follows: Group 1-contingent 56%, avoidance 11%, approach 33%; Group 2-contingent 57%, avoidance 7%, approach 36%. The frequency and duration of conflict episodes are markedly different in the two groups. There are more than 6:1 conflict episodes. A comparison of two groups shows that conflict episodes peak in Session 3 for both groups. Intragroup conflict is also obvious during the differentiation stage. Group 1 experiences 45 episodes of conflict over 9 sessions, whereas Group 2 has only 12 episodes of conflict over 9 sessions. Rybak and Brown (1997) observe that although Group 1 moves towards closure as it develops, Group 2 seems to have difficulty where the group communication does not support the process of differentiation and integration of members into the group dynamics.

Furthermore, another study has also focused on communication pattern in helping group counsellors manage their reactions to conflict. Brown (2003) introduces the verbal-self guidance or VSG in the training of group counsellors. The technique is widely used in the training of group leaders including sports. VSG is based on social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura (1986). The verbal self-guidance (VSG) is a form of self-regulation and a source of verbal persuasion. The training of VSG technique follows the procedure introduced by Meichenbaum (1975). To facilitate the training, a 3-step process called NNP is emphasized. Specifically, participants are encouraged to listen for negative statements (N), ask themselves neutral questions (N), and finally develop positive statements (P) that guided behaviour. Throughout this NNP process, each statement is modelled by the researcher, then repeated by the participants aloud, and, finally, repeated by the participants silently. As a conclusion, VSG requires that participants are trained to

monitor their individual statements and learn to replace any negative statements with positive statements that guide them to master the skills.

Following the procedure, the participants are trained to change their dysfunctional and negative statements (e.g., “There is no way I can find enough members to start a group.”) to functional and positive statements that guide behaviour (e.g., “I can contact my friends at the student service center, or I can ask my lecturer if I can talk to her students about joining group counselling”). The findings reveal a significant main effect for VSG as post training collective efficacy. On the other hand, there is considerably more variance in the means of the efficacy scores in the control conditions relative to those of the treatment condition. Brown (2003) discovers that the VSG technique to be very effective when people are learning to master new skills.

A lot of papers written on group leadership and conflicts have focused on giving suggestions to group leaders on the skills and strategies to use during conflicts. Among the many skills suggested, mediating has received the most attention. Mediation facilitates interaction between the members involved in the conflict and it prohibits the counsellor from taking sides in the conflict (Gladding, 2012).

Mediating refers to a process in which group counsellor as the neutral party helps the group members make their own decisions about the conflict (Folger, et al., 2009). As a mediator, the counsellor facilitates interactions between members in conflict, but the final decision on the conflict rests with the parties involved. The process of mediating conflicts requires the counsellor to be able to execute several skills. According to Brown (2009) and Kottler (2001), the counsellor needs to (i) direct the members in conflict to speak to

one another directly rather than about one another, (ii) block insensitive or inappropriate attacks, (iii) reflect the feelings of what is expressed, (iv) clarify the content of the communications, (v) link common points of agreement, and (vi) encourage other members to get involved once the intensity of conflict is manageable. Donohue and Kolt (1992) suggest that mediators introduce some basic rules which are flexible to keep the discussion on track. They identify four basic rules that include (1) be honest, (2) no name-calling, (3) no interruptions when other member is talking, and (4) agree to solve the problem.

Other researchers like Gladding (2012) and Kormanski (1982) have recommended several different courses of action counsellors can take when faced with conflicts in the group. Among the actions counsellors can engage in to alleviate conflict include (i) divert the negative energy in other directions if they think the conflict is not a constructive engagement at that moment in time, and to postpone its resolution to a more opportune time; (ii) find a consensus where counsellors mediate the disagreement by helping the members to compromise and develop a solution that meets both their needs; and (iii) use a power position where counsellors use their position as authority figure to decisively intervene to stop the conflict if the incident may cause someone to get hurt. From the three courses of actions suggested, retreating from conflicts and using a power position suggest that counsellors avoid discussing the conflict at the time it happens. The disadvantage of the actions is that the conflict may not be addressed and the counsellors have control over the group instead of allowing members to resolve their own issues.

Providing the opportunity for group members to express their thoughts and feelings is the prime responsibility of counsellors in dealing with conflict in group counselling. Brown (2006) and Shaffer and Galinsky (1989) advice counsellors to encourage members to express themselves, while at the same time help the group maintain itself through stressful times. They suggest counsellors to intervene to help the group and its members to weather conflict by revising group goals, norms, and the patterns of relationships existed in the group.

Most counsellors make the decision to confront or avoid conflicts based on their reactions to a number of variables. Lulofs and Cahn (2000) find that leaders would normally assess the nature of the relationship, the perceived urgency of the problem, their perceived responsibility to confront the other person, their perception of the other as approachable or defensive, their resources like time, mood and confidence, the appropriateness of the timing and setting, and what they perceive the outcome will be. Perceived urgency has the greatest impact on whether or not a counsellor will initiate a conflict.

Important leadership functions determine whether a group will work together, accept improvements, and try to develop better ways of doing a job. Knowledge of conflict management strategies is vital to those in leadership roles (Whitaker, 2001; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) and is an "integral part of leadership effectiveness" (Korabik, Baril & Watson, 1993, p 406). Rashid (2005) conducts a study on student leaders' conflict management style. She finds that there are three major conditions that promote conflict in student organizations: role conflict, interdependence and scarcity of resources. Out of 159 members of the Council of Student Organizational Presidents, 30 presidents are randomly

assigned to the experimental group and 30 presidents to the control group. A pretest and posttest experimental design is used in administering a self-reporting conflict management style survey to both groups. A 10-1/2 hour conflict management skills intervention, used with the experimental group but not the control group, is designed by the researcher to enhance participants' organizational leadership behaviours on the areas of understanding the nature of conflict, conflict management styles, communication, and the conflict management models of negotiation and mediation. In addition, a written Post Assessment Survey, designed by the researcher, is administered to the experimental group at the time of the posttest to assess usefulness of the intervention.

Comparison of the pretest and posttest scores reveals a significant increase in the integrating style score, and it is advocated as the most effective approach for all concerned parties in resolving the interpersonal conflict. The control group, who receives no treatment, shows no change from pre to post-test scores. Additional analysis reveals no relationship between genders or student classifications and conflict management styles. The post assessment survey indicates that a very high percentage of the experimental respondents agree or strongly agree that conflict management skills intervention increase a leader's capability to promote a collaborative instead of a competitive conflict management style, increase confidence to use conflict constructively, and help to establish group process understanding within student organizations. Based on these findings, Rashid (2005) concludes that conflict management style may be improved through acquisition of knowledge and conflict management skills intervention.

A prerequisite to becoming an effective counsellor is learning when and how to intervene during conflicts. Kellermann (1998) in his paper proposes an integrative perspective to conflict management in group counselling. Group counsellors can approach conflicts from four different perspectives depending on the types of conflict that occur in the group. The first approach focuses on the emotional level where the objective is to provide space for the member to express his pent-up frustration. The second approach is at the intrapersonal level where transference-related issues become dominant. At this level, the approach emphasizes on the intrapsychic transformation and the perceptual distortion experienced by the group members. The third strategy uses the interpersonal approach where the group counsellor acts as mediator or facilitator to promote interaction between parties involved in the conflict. Finally, the fourth approach focuses on the group-as-a-whole with the aim to transform the group dynamics. Analysis of the meanings of conflicts for the whole group is emphasized. Group counsellors who focus solely on one type of conflict or one style of managing conflict are seen as inflexible. Kellermann (1998) encourages group counsellors to integrate the different approaches since they are highly overlapped and interrelated to each other.

Another perspective to conflict management in group counselling has been introduced by the group system theory (GST). Group counsellors who work according to the group-as-a-whole approach (Durkin, 1981) take into account the whole context in which conflict occurs and apply concepts of individual dynamics to the group as if the group would be able to behave, feel, and think like an individual. Durkin (1981) views intragroup tensions as a specific disharmony in the structure or general system of the entire group, which also affect the individual member and the ecology of the group as a whole. GST

depicts the group as something 'more' than the sum of its members, having its own goals, norms of behaviour, patterns of communication, and power structure which may produce social constraints and interpersonal conflicts (Connors & Caple, 2005). When managing conflicts, according to this approach, the main task of the counsellor is to analyze and handle these various forces and transform those that have a restrictive effect on the group into more enabling ones.

To conclude the discussion on leadership and conflict management in group counseling, several conclusions are offered. Firstly, almost all works on group and group counselling agree that conflict is part of a group process. When people get together to work on their objectives and personal goals, differences in their personality dispositions, means of achieving the goals, values, and opinions may come into play which may cause disharmony in the relationship. Second, to study conflict episodes in group is very challenging. It involves recording of several group sessions and scrutinizing them for communication styles and disruptive behaviours. Third, most study on conflict has focused on the interpersonal conflict and work in this area has come from the communication field. Counsellors learn to deal with interpersonal conflicts in group counselling by adopting the findings from the communication field. However, in group counselling, conflict is not restricted to interpersonal level only. It includes the intrapersonal and the group level conflicts as well. Due to that, more research needs to be conducted to help group counsellors identify and manage the different types of conflict in the group. Kellermann's (1998) integrative approach to conflict management can be the starting point in the training of counselors-to-be to deal with the different types of conflict in the group. Finally, group researchers cum counsellor educators through the

application of various group skills have proposed ideas on how a conflict should be handled but the ideas need to be tested before they are proven effective. In addition, to test for the effectiveness of new skills or new ideas, several experimental as well as control groups need to be introduced.

2.5 Research on Group Counselling In Malaysia

Group work in Malaysia has been in effect since the introduction of guidance and counselling services into the school systems. A school counsellor is required, as part of her duty to the students and the school, to conduct individual as well as group counselling for the students. Another setting where group counselling has been widely utilized is at drug rehabilitation centers. The National Anti Drug Agency (AADK) which oversees drug rehabilitation centers or presently known as Cure and Care Centers, has integrated group approach into almost all of its intervention modules in its attempt to rehabilitate drug addicts both during their early admission into the center or before their release to join the society.

In their evaluation of the development of counselling services in Malaysia, Ching Mey See and Kok-Mun Ng (2010) notice that for the last 10 years, counselling services have experienced a tremendous growth spurt. This is evidenced with (a) an increased number of counselling education programs that include doctoral training and master's-level counselling programs in public and private universities; (b) a greater attention given to mental health and counselling in print and electronic media; (c) an increased number of counselling-related workshops, seminars, and conferences; and (d) instituting licensure for counselling.

Even though group counselling has been acknowledged as having positive effects in stimulating positive changes in group members, its popularity does not surpass the demand for individual counselling. Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin and Noh Haji Amit (2005) explore the reasons behind the lack of group counselling practice as a mean of solving problems in Malaysian context. They identify four factors that lead to group counselling not being popularly practiced in Malaysia. The first factor is the introduction of the Counsellor Act 1998 that warns individuals who are not qualified as counsellors to engage in counselling related activities to avoid legal implications. The second factor relates to the inadequate number of qualified counsellors to provide supervision and training in groups. Available counsellors are more interested to spend time conducting individual instead of group counselling with their clients. Thirdly is the inappropriate attitudes and lack of awareness towards group works among the Malaysian society. Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin and Noh Haji Amit (2005) claim that culturally and psychologically, Malaysians are quite secretive about their personal life and are not yet ready to discuss their issue through group sharing. The last factor has to do with the lack of promotion on the benefits of group counselling.

Despite the fact that individual counselling is more popular among the public, group works have received much research interest. Research has been conducted on groups, particularly on group guidance or psycho-education group, and group counselling. Jacobs, Masson, Harvill, and Schimmel (2012) postulate that research on group will continue to grow over time because groups will become an important mode of delivery helping services to society. It is more cost effective and more people can be helped compared to the individual counselling. In Malaysia, research focus on group varies from

using the group counselling as one of the intervention method, exploring the effectiveness of different counselling theories to manage problem, to developing modules for group counselling. The respondents of the studies have range from school students to counselors trainees to counsellors.

Among the studies that implement group as an intervention tool include, Tan Hua Khim and Asmah Ismail (2012), Salmiah Monshie, et al. (2004) who focus their research on group guidance. While Chua Lay Nee, Zuria Mahmud, and Noriah Mohd Ishak (2010), Firdaus Mukhtar, Tian PS Oei, and Mohd Jamil Mohd Yaacob (2011), Hashami Bohari, Khalid Yusoff, and Abdul Halim Othman (1994), Mohammad Nasir Bistamam and Rohany Nasir (2009), Mohd Aziz Shah Mohamed Arip, Fatimah Yusoff, Ahmad Jazimin Jusoh, Syed Sofian Syed Salim, and Nazariah Abd. Samad (2011), and Sapora Sipon (2008) are among some of the names who study the effectiveness of group counselling. Most of the researchers either develop their own modules or modify existing modules to reflect the theory of their interest.

Tan Hua Khim and Asmah Ismail (2012), and Salmiah Monshie, et al. (2004) develop a short module that consists of five to ten one- to two-hour group sessions to tackle some specific issues involving school students. Tan Hua Khim and Asmah Ismail (2012) use group guidance approach to manage truancy among secondary students at the public schools. Salmiah Monshie, et al. (2004) try to identify the effect of group guidance experience on the academic achievement and self-concept of the moderate academic achievers.

Both Tan Hua Khim and Asmah Ismail (2012), and Salmiah Monshie, et al. (2004) choose their participants from the school population whose ages are between 13 to 15 years old. The participants are randomly assigned into either a guidance group or a control group. Both groups undergo four to five weeks of guidance group held twice a week. The participants in Tan Hua Khim and Asmah Ismail (2012) attend guidance activities that focus on knowing one self, assertive communication skills, and understanding one's internal motivation to attend school, while the control group does not receive any treatment. On the other hand, Salmiah Monshie, et al. (2004) introduce their experimental group to activities designed to enhance the students' self-concept, while the control group undergo study skills activities. The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale is used to measure self-concept in the pre and post treatments. Both studies show significant improvement among the subjects in the experimental groups. There is a significant reduction in truancy behaviour among the participants but with no improvement among the students in the control group (Tan Hua Khim & Asmah Ismail, 2012), while Salmiah Monshie, et al. (2004) experimental group shows a significant increase in social self-concept and overall self-concept compared to the control group. However, there is no significant increase in academic achievement of the students. In both studies, the participants do not show a significant improvement in the academic achievement, the reason being the modules do not include any academic related topics. They believe that an improvement in attendance and self-concept may bring better academic scores. Nevertheless, academic achievement is highly skills oriented and content specific, and to have a higher self-concept will not guarantee an academic success.

In the above studies, the researchers apply group activities as well as the element of teaching to disseminate knowledge on truancy (Tan Hua Khim & Asmah Ismail, 2012) and self-concepts (Salmiah Monshie, et al., 2004) to the participants. The numbers of participants for the studies are small. Tan Hua Khim and Asmah Ismail (2012) include 40 students in their studies while Salmiah Monshie, et al. (2004) use 29 students as their participants. The participants are not only small in numbers but are purposively selected from the truancy discipline list (Tan Hua Khim & Asmah Ismail, 2012) and among the moderate academic achievers (Salmiah Monshie, et al., 2004). These two limitations prevent the findings from being generalized to other students' population in other schools.

In studies that focus on group counselling, the attention has often been on the application of some theoretical based approach to manage certain problems. Sapora Sipon (2008) studies the effectiveness of a person-centered, rational-emotive behaviour, and cognitive psychology Ad-Din (Othman Mohamed, 2005) theories on teachers' stress. The study compares the treatment effects of three theoretically based counselling groups at reducing stress levels. The instrument used is the Occupational Stress Indicator (OSI) developed by Cooper, Sloan and William (1988). The control pre and post design is used. The subjects are 46 highly stressed teachers age between 21 to 48 years old. They are randomly divided into four groups: (i) person-centered counselling group (n=12), (ii) rational-emotive behaviour counselling group (n=12), (iii) cognitive psychology Ad-Din counselling group (n=12), and (iv) a control group (n=10). All treatment groups receive group counselling sessions for six consecutive weeks with one meeting each week. The results of the study show that all the three groups display significant reduction (pretest to

posttest scores) on their job stress but without any significant differences on job stress between them. On the other hand, the control group shows an increase on their stress level at the end of the study. Since the study is using an Islamic approach to counselling as part of its intervention, the respondents are all Muslims. Other teachers who adhere to other religions or belief systems are not included in the study.

Similar to Sapora Sipon (2008), Mohammad Nasir Bistamam and Rohany Nasir (2009) also try to observe the application of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy via group counselling in helping adolescents from divorced families. The study explores the kind of disturbance experienced by the respondents, and their internal adjustment process in term of thinking, feeling, and behaving in dealing with external disturbances. It is also to ascertain the effects of group counselling on the academic and career planning of the respondents. The respondents are 10 form two girls (age: 14 years old) who are purposively selected. They attend group counselling sessions for eight weeks with one meeting per week. Each session runs for two hours. The results of the study indicate that group counselling is (i) able to determine that the disturbance among the adolescents is due to their irrational belief systems, (ii) proven to be effective in changing the adolescents' belief systems from irrational to a more constructive thinking, and (iii) able to improve their academic and career planning.

Looking at the studies performed by Sapora Sipon (2008) and Mohammad Nasir Bistamam and Rohany Nasir (2009), the researchers use small sample and purposely selected their participants. But, both studies add a control group to their research to compare the effectiveness of their interventions.

Furthermore, in term of theory, the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) tends to be popular among researchers who study group. Mohammad Aziz Shah Mohamed Arip, et al. (2011) and Firdaus Mukhtar, et al. (2011) examine the effectiveness of CBT on students with low self-concept and depressed Malay patients, respectively. Mohammad Aziz Shah Mohamed Arip, et al. (2011) observe that CBT approach is effective in increasing the self-concept of the treatment groups compared to the subjects in the control group who do not receive any intervention. In Firdaus Mukhtar, et al. (2011) study, depressed patients who are assigned to the CBT group ($n=58$) compared to non-treatment patients ($n=55$) who either receive medication or other forms of treatment, suggest that the CBT group shows a significant reduction in the depressogenic cognitions or depressive thoughts; with the reduction remaining stable across the two follow-up assessments. On the other hand, the depressogenic thoughts among the control group have increased from the pre-treatment to post-treatment, and they are consistently high at the follow-up.

Mohammad Aziz Shah Mohamed Arip, et al. (2011) and Firdaus Mukhtar, et al. (2011) have purposely selected their samples into the treatment and control groups. Mohammad Aziz Shah Mohamed Arip, et al. (2011) have three treatment groups ($n= 31$) and one control group ($n=42$) who are selected among adolescents with low self-concepts; while Firdaus Mukhtar, et al. (2011) choose the samples from 203 Malay patients suffering from depression and then randomly divide them into six treatment groups compared to one control group. Even though the numbers of experimental groups involved are more than one, Mohammad Aziz Shah Mohamed Arip, et al. (2011) study lacks a control group, which is made up of adolescents with high self-concept that could also serve as a

control group in the study. Firdaus Mukhtar, et al. (2011) results could be influenced by the special treatment the patients in the experimental groups received from the researchers. The patients are given the flexibility “to change the appointment date with their doctors to the same day as their therapy program” (p. 23). Usually, this kind of privilege given to psychiatric patients, in particular to the Malays, would make them feel indebted to the researcher and a way to pay him back is by trying hard to improve their conditions.

Based on the six studies mentioned earlier, one common characteristic stands out. Since the researchers are using and conducting the modules they developed, facilitator's effect might have contributed to the positive changes observed in the experimental groups. As researchers cum counsellors, they are more motivated to prove their modules are effective to tackle the issue under study. They conduct the group sessions from the beginning until the group ends. They are experienced and competent counsellors, and the questions remain whether their experience and competency could have affected the results or whether the same effects would be observed if other counsellors follow the procedures and methodology described by them? To ensure the modules reliability, the researchers should train other counsellors to use the modules and let the newly trained counsellors conduct the group sessions.

Recently, Abu Yazid Abu Bakar and Noriah Mohd. Ishak (2011) try to compare between the professional group counselling with one of human resource division in the Naval Army of Malaysia (TLDM). The study discovers some similarities in terms of guiding principles shared by both practices as well as some limitations. One of the limitations to

the full application of group counselling concepts has to do with the basic principle of the army service. In the army, order of communication practiced is of top-down where lower rank officers are expected to respect the higher rank officers. Another challenge to the practice is the number of attendance to each group meeting. As suggested by Gladding (2012) group is at its best when the number of group members is between six to eight people. But, the group meeting of the army officers may reach as many as 50 people. Due to the big crowd, it is impossible for therapeutic culture and trust to be established among the members.

Another interest in group works has been to develop module for group works. Many modules have been developed for guidance groups and very few have organized modules for group counselling. Ahmad Jazimin Jusoh, et al. (2010) develop a module based on *Choice Theory & Reality Therapy* (CTRT) to be used within the group counselling context. The module integrates the four stages of group development as described by Corey (2010). The group developmental stages include the initial, transitional, working, and termination. The module has 10 sessions and they focus on managing discipline problem among the school students. The module is evaluated by 10 experts from counselling background as well as from a certified expert in Choice Theory and Reality Therapy. The module receives 81.7 percent level of agreement or 0.817 for content validity and is still in the process of being evaluated for its reliability.

The study on leadership in group counselling has also been very limited. One study conducted by Fadilah Zaini and Maisarah Ishak (2006) has focused on the counselling students' perceptions towards leadership in group counselling. The participants are 40

counselling students who register for group counselling class during the time the study is conducted. The researchers measure the respondents' perception towards counsellor leadership. They notice that the participants have average perception, mean of 3.67, towards leadership in group counselling. The study uses purposive sampling meaning that only students taking the group counselling class is included thus the findings do not represent the perception of all the counselling students in the program. The study fails to specify how the data is collected and the kind of measurement tool used to determine the respondents' perceptions towards group leadership.

The review of literature on counselling services in Malaysia shows that researchers are sensitive to promote group intervention to social problems. Most often, they would recommend incorporating group counselling as one of the modus operandi to provide help. Amran Hassan, Asmah Ismail, and Norbayah Arifin (2010) suggest group counselling to be included in the service provided to the elderly to help them cope with loneliness in the old age. Kye Sue Kiat (2013) and Gan Kah Liang (2013) believe group counselling would be helpful to patients with grown up congenital heart defect in National Heart Institute. Salmiah Monshie, et al. (2004) claim that by adding the counselling element in the guidance group, participants with personal problems could be helped and the information shared through the group activities could be better digested. Mazlina Munawar (2012) encourages counsellors to help the homeless gain a sense of belonging through group counselling as group provides them with an avenue to reduce stress and to learn coping skills from each other.

In term of its utilization as helping service in Malaysia, counselling is seen as having a low level of cultural and social integration. Ching Mey See and Kok-Mun Ng (2010) observe that the services tend to be categorized according to specific language and ethnic groups. Malays who speak Bahasa Melayu tend to seek out Malay counsellors. And, the Chinese counsellors tend to organize counselling services that cater to the needs of the Chinese society. The situation calls for concern as counselling services should reach all Malaysians regardless of their ethnic backgrounds or religious beliefs. In order to achieve that, Ida Hartina (2003) and Dini Farhana Baharudin (2012) call on the counselling programs to prepare their counsellor trainees to be multi-culturally competent. By doing that, the trainees are able to meet the needs of the society and not to limit their services to their own race.

Similar to the scenario in the United States, counsellor educators in Malaysians are also concerned about counsellors' competency. Abdul Halim Othman (1996) suggests that Malaysia should develop its own training model that meets the needs of the society cultural and religious values. Abdul Halim Othman interest in urging Malaysian to develop its own indigenous framework to counselling has started in 1986 when he began to critically analyzed concepts from three different theories, person centered therapy, rational emotive therapy, and psychoanalysis. He wants counsellors to be open and critical of some aspects of the theories that are not parallel with the cultural values of the community, in particular among the Muslim clients. Sarojini Menon (2000) in her assessment of the counselling services in Malaysia also makes similar suggestion. She gives the example of Chinese guidance workers who have successfully integrated their traditional values with the westerns. In order to develop a training program unique to

their society, the Chinese search for a more appropriate balance between the individual freedom as advocated in the west and social responsibility such as grounded in Confucian ideals (Scaff & Ting, 1972).

The issue raised by Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin and Noh Haji Amit (2005) on the limited used of group counselling by counsellors to help those in needs have also been discussed among counsellor educators and counsellor practitioners in Malaysia. After more than thirty years counselling services have been introduced in Malaysia, Abdul Halim Othman, et al. (2000), Ching Mey See and Kok-Mun Ng (2010), and Sarojini (2000) have called on the Malaysian universities to reevaluate their counselling programs, so that professionalism in counselling can be established worldwide. Abdul Halim Othman, et al. (2000) write:

The history of counsellor preparation in this country (Malaysia) shows that a detailed set of selection standards has not yet been developed and agreed upon, though there has been some progress in this direction. Counsellor preparation varies from one institution to another and this has resulted in the differences in teaching, curriculum, selection of candidates, entry requirement of candidates, entry requirements, counsellor qualifications, training material, length, and content preparation, and the degree offered (p. 137)

Abdul Halim Othman, et al. (2000) notice that the counselling programs offered at the universities are varied and they are not based on one model. Certain universities based their counselling curriculum on psychology whereas the other on education, depending on the objectives of the faculty that set up the counselling programs. As a result, counselling students upon their graduation may develop strength in either knowledge of human development or on counselling applied skills.

Another issue that is related to counsellor training and competency is the topic of supervision. Presently, Malaysia is still lacking in competent group counsellors (Ching

Mey See & Kok-Mun Ng, 2010; Rafidah Aga Mohd Jaladin & Noh Haji Amit, 2005) to provide quality supervision to counsellor trainees. Counsellor trainees only receive supervision during their practicum and internship trainings. The number of supervision visits and quality of assessment vary among the universities. The profession needs quality supervision for counsellor trainees as well as for newly licensed counsellors. Abdul Halim Othman, et al. (2000) urge the local universities and the Board of Counsellors to at least meet the minimum standard in selecting and training of counsellor trainees. They suggest that all the counselling programs provide opportunities for counsellors to continuously practice their skills and acquire new knowledge under proper supervision. Ching Mey See and Kok-Mun Ng (2010) want more research to be conducted to define and refine counselling purpose and directions, theory and practice, and training framework so that one quality standard can be promoted to sustain the professionalism of counsellors.

In short, interest in group works has shown a positive development in Malaysia for the last fifteen years. More research has been conducted to explore the effectiveness of using group to change some behavioural problem. Groups have also been a medium for researchers to test the effectiveness of their modules. However, groups as a medium of intervention can be improved if more research can explore the dynamic of leadership functions and the training of various group skills, so that more competent counsellors can be trained to deliver effective group counselling. Currently, most of the research conducted on group, in particular group counselling, are carried by counsellors and counsellor educators who are familiar with the topic. A novice in counselling has rarely done research on group counselling. As a conclusion, due to the competency concern

among group counsellors and the lack of research on leadership functions in group counselling and conflict management, the study seeks to explore the issue and develop a training module that could fulfill some training needs of counsellor trainees to become competent group counsellors.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed group leadership from the Western and Islamic perspectives, and conflicts management in group counselling. A special section has been devoted to the discussion on group counselling development in Malaysia. Overall, the perspectives on group leadership between the Western and the Islamic show that effective group leaders share between them more similarities than differences. In both perspectives, leaders should be people-oriented, believe in people's potential to change for the better, empathy, warmth, and responsible. The only major difference between the perspectives is Islam stresses on the responsibility of group counsellors to guide the members to adhere to the Islamic way of life and they should be accountable for their own actions.

The chapter has also deliberated on the conflict functions, and the influence of cognition and emotion on conflict outcomes. The past literature emphasizes on the need for counsellor trainees to understand their conflict styles and the factors influencing their conflict behaviours. Finally, in term of its interest on group work, Malaysia is more attentive in developing modules to be used in groups or using groups as intervention in determining the effectiveness of group approaches. Interest on group counsellor personal development or skills competency is still lacking. Not much is known about the perception of group leadership functions among the Malaysian group counsellors.

Moreover, no study has been conducted to explore the counsellor's conflict management strategies in group counselling. Due to that, this study seeks to find out how the counsellor trainees at the Malaysian university perceive conflict and group leadership functions, and how they manage conflict in group counselling. These two topics, conflict management and group leadership functions among the counsellor trainees, have not yet received much attention within the Malaysian group context; thus, the present research hopes to shed some light on it.

