

Psychological Experience of Buddhist Counselors when Encountered with Clients of Conflicting Value

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Abstract

This study employs qualitative research. The aim of this study is to explore the psychological experience of Buddhist counselors when encountered with conflicting value. The objective of this research is to understand the psychological experience of Buddhist counselors when dealing with conflicting value through conducting semi-structured interviews using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research style as a tool for qualitative research to capture the details and experience of six experienced Buddhist counselors. Data collected were transcribed, coded and arranged into themes, which got translated from Thai to English. The six informants were chosen in relation to their experience in using core approach of Buddhist counseling along with prior experience in dealing with conflicting value. The recruitment employed purposive sampling through a gatekeeper that qualifies the inclusion criteria. The research instruments are semi-structured interview questions that have been crafted to highlight the informants' answer on their experiences in conflicting value.

The result of this study shows three stages: Initial, Process, and Integration. Initial stage is the reaction and response of informants when first encountering with conflicting value and consists of three themes (Interaction with conflicting value, effects to performance, and consequence) with seven subthemes. Process stage illustrates the awareness and development of informants in accordance with conflicting value, which consist of five themes

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(Initial awareness, internal process, Post-awareness, Post: effects to performance, and Post: consequence) with eleven subthemes. Lastly, integration stage portrays the learnings and knowledge as informants gain experience in dealing with conflicting value, which consists of personal implication as theme with four subthemes. Informants who undergo the process of encountering and overcoming conflicting value expressed deep learning in Buddhist counseling and Buddhist teachings along with various understanding of self and attachments.

The result of going through conflicting value enhances self-awareness in working process of Buddhist counseling and further develop deeper understandings in Buddhist teachings that increases the ability of informants to perceive attachments to self and move towards the practice of impermanence, suffering, and non-self in Three marks of existence along with four noble truths through this experience.

Keywords: Buddhist Counseling, Counseling, Conflicting Value, Three Marks of Existence, Four Noble Truths, Counselor-in-training

Introduction

There are various difficulties that counselors have to face in their profession. Encountering clients with conflicting values to counselors' can create challenges that can disrupt the therapeutic process. Counselors who are not sufficiently aware can unknowingly impose their own values on to clients and create an unsuitable psychological environment for therapy (Cottone et al, 2021). American Counseling Association (ACA) has guidelines that outline counselor's responsibility to gain personal awareness and skill to be capable of working with different clients and to avoid forcing values that are not consistent with therapeutic goals (ACA, 2005). This emphasizes the importance of dealing with conflicting values to become and remain effective counselors.

Models such as the Counselor Values-Based Conflict Model (CBCM) assist counselors in assessing and deciding on the next appropriate course of action when dealing with clients who have conflicting values (Kocet & Herlihy, 2014). Numerous aspects are considered in dealing with this practical issue as a counselor such as competencies, personal awareness, and counseling approaches. However, these methods focus on diverting conflict of individuals rather than resolving the root cause. In contrary to Western psychotherapy, Buddhist counseling provides insights that incorporates to working effectively with clients, focuses on awareness of self, and lessened attachments (Shiah, 2016), which paves way to a new perspective on conflicting value. The purpose of this study is to explore the perception, methods, and techniques of dealing with conflicting values in the practice of Buddhist counselors.

There are various implications of Buddhist concepts that has effectively integrated into counseling and psychotherapy today such as the concept of nonself or emptiness state, to be free from the attachment of self-identity (Van Gordon et al., 2017). The teaching is to experience the emptiness-state, in which no self-perception interferes with the perception of the clients. This facilitates counselors not only to let go of the differences in personal values, but also to recognize that even the value individuals pertain to is not real, and not the essence of our individuality (Giles, 1993). The predominant Buddhist counseling framework in Thailand was developed by Soree Pokaeo (2010), which consist of the 4F model (Facilitate Disclosure, Facilitate Interaction, Facilitate Growth, Facilitate Counseling), and TIR Model (Tuning In, Identifying Split, and Realization). The approach is based on the Buddhist teachings and integrates counseling and psychotherapy. The Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca), and the Three Marks of Existence (Tilakkhana) serve as guiding principles to understand clients and their phenomenological world. However, Buddhist counselors are the conduit that links Buddhist teachings and counseling. Without adequate first-hand experience of Buddhist

teachings and practice, counselors may not efficiently use the approach to its potential. Nonself (anatta) in Three marks of existence stands as one of the key components in tackling conflicting value. Since there is no self, no value can remain to create conflict.

With integration to counseling and psychotherapy, there are three core frameworks created for Buddhist counselors: T-I-R (Tuning in, Identifying split, and realization) (Pokaeo, 2010). The prerequisite for Buddhist counselors to initiate the model is to decrease the sense of self to truly perceive client's phenomenological world without any interference. To decrease the sense of self is a difficult task in itself, where various attachments that lay hidden such as attachment of personal value could unveil during sessions and cause trouble to initiate and maintain the tuning in process. However, when Buddhist counselors progress beyond the attachment of individuality, a deeper sense of empathy can be gained due to the absence of judgements when there is no conflict in value with clients, can benefit the efficacy of therapy greatly (Pokaeo, 2010).

Even though this is a shift in perception of counseling, from giving importance to self and individuality to the notion of nonself, the progress towards letting go of attachment to individuality, to the state of emptiness (Van Gordon et al., 2017), there has been minimal studies done that links Buddhist counseling and psychotherapy to the conflict of personal values. The study aims to emphasize the importance of this aspect in practical use through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) qualitative research of experienced Buddhist Counselors and their methods in handling conflicting values and practical use both in and outside of counseling session.

The research findings portray a process of Buddhist counselors encountering, and overcome conflicting value through using TIR model and the understandings of Four Noble truths and Three marks of existence. This process can benefit Buddhist counselors from trainees to supervisors, as a guide to navigate conflicting value dilemma.

Objectives of Research

The aim of this study is to understand the psychological experience of Buddhist counselors when dealing with conflicting value. The expectation of this study is to gain understanding of the difficulties in dealing with conflicting values, to understanding the process and techniques that addresses conflicting value of Buddhist counselors.

Research Methodology

This study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research design through using semi-structured interviews to collect data from six informants who use Buddhist counseling as core approach. The recruitment will employ purposive sampling through a gatekeeper who knows the majority of experienced Buddhist counselors who are available and qualifies to participate in the study. The six informants were chosen in relation to their experience in using core approach of Buddhist counseling along with prior experience in dealing with conflicting value. In the inclusion criteria, informants must have more than five years of experience as counselors and have prior experience in dealing with conflicting value. The validation of data through IPA standards and experienced supervisors. The interviews take around 60-90 minutes depending on the content received. The interviews will all be done online.

Data analysis of the interviews will be conducted in accordance with Smith et al., (2009) in Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) by identifying themes of each interview with interpretative process, identify concepts and cluster those concepts together systematically, and focus on individual details first before connecting them with other interviews in a bigger picture. Researcher will code these concepts and summarize them into themes. Sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence are four principles in which validity and quality are ensured in IPA research (Yardley, 2000).

Results of Research

The number of informants that were required for the data to be saturated was six. The interviews were conducted between June 2023 to April 2024. The average duration of the interview is 90 minutes

Informants' details are as follows: All P001-P006 informants are using Buddhist counseling as their core approach. Informants' details are provided in Table 1

Table 1 Informants' information

Informant Code	Years of Experience	Occupation
P001	14	Counselor / University Professor
P002	13	Counselor / University Professor
P003	9	Counselor / Supervisor
P004	22	Counselor / University Professor
P005	24	University Professor / Counselor Trainer
P006	21	Counselor / Counselor Trainer

The data from the interviews illustrate three stages that Buddhist counselors go through to overcoming conflicting value: initial, process and integration. The initial stage signifies the first encounter with lack of experience. Various negative emotions and actions occurred. No solutions or awareness in this stage, only struggle. The process stage shows the beginning of awareness in conflicting value and self-reflection followed. At this stage, informants began to understand the attachments within and move towards experiencing Buddhist teachings and guidance from supervisors. The last stage, integration, signifies the consolidation of knowledge and experience gained from conflicting value. Informants stated the importance of awareness in internal fluctuations of the mind and the constant work that is required.

Conflicting value data grouping

Results from the interviews can be grouped into three stages: Initial, Process, and Integration. 9 themes emerged with 22 subthemes in total. *Table 2* is the grouping of data that were collected on Buddhist counselors experience encountering conflicting value.

Table 2 Conflicting Value Process Diagram

Stage	Theme	Subtheme
Initial	Interaction with conflicting value	1. Frustration 2. Judgement 3. Uncomfortable
	Effects to performance	1. Loss of focus 2. Leading Clients
	Consequence	1. Unable to understand clients 2. Survival mode
Process	Initial Awareness	1. Supervision
	Internal Process	1. Self-reflection/awareness 2. Attachment of self 3. Benefit of others
	Post-awareness	1. Aware of personal value 2. Effects of attachment 3. Acceptance 4. Less judgements
	Post: Effects to performance	1. Being present 2. Boundlessness
	Post: Consequence	1. Less expectations
Integration	Personal Implication	1. Emptiness 2. Insight 3. Mindfulness 4. Impermanence

Initial stage

The initial stage signifies the first experiences of informants with conflicting value. Informants reported that the initial encounters were during their practicum and internship period as trainees. As they were interacted with conflicting value, informants experienced frustration. The frustration came when clients referred to beliefs, values or actions that may

contradict informants' own personal value, which created a negative feeling that leads to unproductive habits. This feeling leads to the second subtheme, judgement. Informants reported that after the frustration comes judgement, where informants were judging the clients from their statements, which could cause clients to be less open to sharing their stories. 'Uncomfortable' subtheme comes in parallel with judgement where informants felt 'not okay', uneasy with the clients, and did not feel like they want to be there anymore. An Informant expressed difficulties in being with clients who did not share the same belief, and portrayed unawareness in attachment of values that caused by frustration:

“Couldn't do anything, I just took that frustration home, thinking that I already tried telling him [what to do] but he doesn't want to believe me or maybe we just want different things out of the session. I wanted to end with a strong punchline and let him choose what he would want to do with his life. Either way I ended up frustrated that [he didn't believe me]”. (P002, Line 65-67)

As a result of subthemes 'frustration', 'judgement', and 'uncomfortable', follows with 'effects to performance' theme that consists of 'loss of focus', and 'leading clients' subthemes. The effects of these negative thoughts and emotions that emerged due to encountering conflicting value caused informants to lose their focus on the clients and began to unintentionally lead them in the attempt to change clients' perspectives. For example, P006 displayed 'frustration' and 'judgement' in the previous theme, which attempted to lead the client to be rid of their pain without helping them become aware of the problem themselves.

“Means I intently wanted to change them. I wanted them to be free from this pain but they're still doing something wrong so of course you're in pain. It's like I jumped straight to the solution, which is not directly our job. It's supposed to go through their own understanding and commitment before getting to the solution” (P006, Line 95-97)

Subsequently, the next theme ‘consequence’ sums up the result of ‘interaction with conflicting value’ and ‘effects to performance’ themes, which shows informants ‘unable to understand clients’ and goes into ‘survival mode’ during the session. Throughout the initial stage, informants reported feeling overwhelming negative feelings and felt lost but were unaware that conflicting value with clients were causing this derailment during the session.

Process stage

The process stage highlights the crucial progression of initial awareness to overcoming conflicting value through awareness of attachments. The themes for this stage consist of ‘initial awareness’, ‘internal process’, ‘post-awareness’, ‘post: effects to performance’, and ‘post: consequence’. The first theme of this stage, ‘initial awareness’, portrays the first time informants became aware of conflicting value. Supervision was the only solution that allowed informants to learn about this issue. Informants were shown through supervision that the cause of no progress in the sessions was due to the informants’ attachment to their own values and that blocked the ability to understand the clients. Supervisors gave guidance for informants to reflect and work on themselves to overcome this blockade.

The next theme ‘**internal process**’ signifies the beginning self-work that has been initiated towards understanding conflicting value, which consists of ‘self-reflection/awareness’, ‘attachment to self’, and ‘benefit of others.’ In ‘‘self-reflection/awareness’ subtheme, Informants started to realize their self-made standard of good and bad, or right and wrong that they judge others by. Once clients are considered bad by their standards, informants became bias and unable to connect with the clients. Informants also realized their fixation on wanting clients to be different as shown in P001 example:

“It helped me to reflect on myself, and made me become mindful and conscious, to not be so narrow-minded and rigid in the division and judgement of good and bad, to be so attached to good and evil” (P001, Line 114-115).

In subtheme, ‘attachment of self’, informants started to become less attached to individual ideals and regain the ability to be more present with the clients. As self-attachment lessened, informants reported being able to feel and understand their clients better and regain the capability to facilitate beneficial factors for the client during the session that leads to therapeutic goals. P003 expressed that awareness in attachment of self, clarified the reason therapeutic process was not progress

“This helped me to understand that the attachment of self and the sense of self clouded my mind. Questions like why didn’t he do this, why did he do that, made me realize those questions didn’t come from the client, they all come from me and my sense of self that didn’t agree with him at the time” (P003, Line 159-162)

‘**Benefit of others**’ subtheme illustrates the change of perspective for informants. As informants’ attachment lessened, the ability to reflect on their sessions increases with less resistance from personal value that allowed informants to identify the best course of action for their clients and respect their autonomy, getting back to therapeutic goals, separation of personal values from others, and increase in empathy.

‘**Post-awareness**’ theme consists of 4 subthemes, ‘Aware of personal value’, ‘effects of attachment’, ‘acceptance’, and ‘less judgement’. These four subthemes competently illustrate the theme ‘post-awareness’ as the practice and knowledge of conflicting value became internalized, guidance consolidated and self-reflect into their own perspective and worldview, where counselors recalibrated their practice.

‘**Aware of personal value**’ subtheme is linked to internal process theme as one initially see their own emotional turbulence after encountering conflicting value, self-reflect, gain some understanding and continue into their self-awareness until their own internal vision became clearer to their actual values. P003 expressed the awareness that came with self-reflection:

“I realized that we do not really choose our own values. I grew up in a generation where if we do good then we get good things in return, and doing good things look a certain way. These social concepts molded me into prescribing these values as my own without questioning or exploring them. So, I think having the opportunity to go through these values and realizing which is our own and which is determined by society is valuable” (P003, Line 259-265)

P003 showed self-awareness in the attachment of personal value and surpassing through understanding its origination.

‘**Effects of attachment**’ subtheme reflects what informants felt after awareness of personal value and began to lessen their attachment of self. Once the attachment of self decrease, informants described the attached feeling as being possessed by values and expectations that they were unaware of and expectations that caused them to feel a certain way. As awareness increased and the ‘possession’ of value and expectations faded, informants started to realize what had happened. P006 stated clearly that

“Every struggle during the session for counselors, there is an attachment to value such as the belief that parents should be fair to their children, how they should raise the children, and if the counselor doesn’t see fairness in raising the children, they would feel certain negativity towards the client. This indicates that we select certain values to be important to us and it varies for every individual. However, for Buddhist counseling, it doesn’t matter what that value is, the value is an attachment nonetheless.” (P006, Line 262-265; 267-269)

The statement from P006 entails that regardless of the value one upholds, to have an attachment to value would hinder their ability as a Buddhist counselor.

‘**Acceptance**’ subtheme shows a deeper sense of understanding of clients as informants became aware of their own attachments to self and value. Acceptance entails give priority to understanding and empathize with the clients regardless of their values and actions.

The last subtheme in ‘Post-awareness’ is ‘**less judgements**’. ‘Less judgement’ illustrates the realization that there is less judgement because of awareness in values and understanding of negatives in valuing personal value over others. Like the concept of acceptance, one must first become aware of the judgements in others before having less judgement. This process requires constant work and allows informants to gain self-understanding more in-depth.

The themes ‘**post: effects of performance**’ and ‘**post: consequences**’ are linked to ‘effects of performance’ and ‘consequences’ in initial stage to compare the performance during sessions before and after of informants developing awareness in conflicting value. In contrast to the initial stage, informants reported ‘being present’, ‘boundlessness’, and ‘less expectations’ during the sessions with clients.

‘**Being present**’ in the theme ‘post: effects of performance’ is the beginning of the process ‘tuning in’ in Buddhist counseling and psychotherapy model (Pokaew, 2010), where counselors enter the session without preconceive notions or agenda, going in as an empty canvas ready to facilitate and understand the client, whatever the story may be. From example, P004 stated

“I don’t think [being present] was intentional. I just completely focused on the client. Before I didn’t do that, I was thinking I want to be present jumping from thoughts to desires” (P004, Line 219-222)

The statement indicates that being present is a natural occurrence that can’t be forced or intentional. Rather, an accumulation of practice and self-reflection that allows informants to become free of distractions during the session.

‘**Boundlessness**’ subtheme is molded into the process of tuning in as well. As being present led informants into tuning in process, ‘boundlessness’ subtheme is reported once counselors’ focus and attention became solely focused on the client, a deep concentration that makes the counselor’s sense of self dissipate. There are no barriers between counselors and clients, increasing therapeutic relationships and progress. However, informants reported that boundlessness doesn’t always happen, there are

certain things to prepare yourself to increase the likelihood of this happening. The experience of boundlessness also provides insights into understanding the clients.

‘**Less expectations**’ subtheme in ‘Post: consequence’ theme provides a realization for the counselors during the session that every session, there is a sense of expectation from the counselor. Not always to the clients, but sometimes to themselves to do a good job as a counselor, or the hope of wanting clients to gain something for the therapy. However, from the process that informants undergo, this expectation of self and others is noticeably lighter. This also reinforces back to ‘being present’ and ‘boundlessness’ to become more effective and back towards ‘less expectations’. Therefore, this process becomes a cycle of positive feedback where each experience supports each other and increases the lightness of the mind. P005 shares the experience of having less expectations and the benefits towards counseling sessions:

“I can listen without being associated with my own values. I can see the effects of listening and being ‘value free’ brings for me. I can start to see many difficult things as if it’s a normal story. I’ve worked with refugees that went through traumas and tortures. I listened to them blaming soldiers and others taking advantage of them, not allowing them back into their own countries, so they made to run for their lives. Being value free, I was able to listen without taking any sides” (P005, Line 491-495)

Integration stage

In the integration stage, informants elaborate on experience of growth from conflicting value, resulting in shifts of perspectives and world view. This stage signifies stepping out of counseling and bringing knowledge and experience into daily lives. All informants reported experiencing the teachings of Buddhism first-hand and its application to prepare for the role as Buddhist counselors as well. This stage consists of one theme, ‘personal implication’, with four subthemes, ‘emptiness’, ‘insight’, ‘mindfulness’, and ‘impermanence’.

‘Emptiness’ is an important subtheme that highlights the integration of conflicting value process and Buddhist teachings. Informants reported that the experience of emptiness differs from thinking of emptiness. To experience emptiness, one must sever ties to attachment of self and value, to become present in the moment. P002 states that self-awareness paves the way towards emptiness;

“Knowing someone else’s value is to know your own. When you keep being aware of your own values faster and faster, it reminds me of when my teacher told me about emptiness. Because before emptiness, it’s not empty. Knowing that it is not empty leads you to emptiness. Once there is emptiness, you can start tuning in [to clients]. This means, you can’t tune in if you’re not empty and you’re not empty because you’re not aware that you’re not empty” (P002, Line 415-418)

The state of emptiness, even though difficult to constantly maintain, can be considered as one of the answers to conflicting value, as one is absent from self, then conflict does not exist.

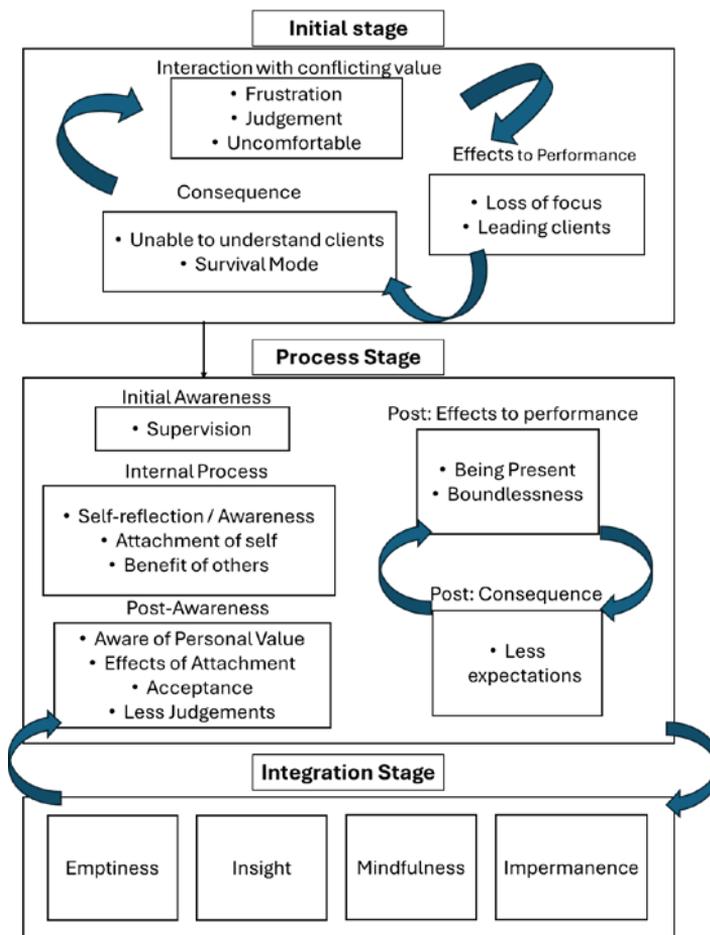
‘Insight’ is another subtheme that informants gave importance to. This subtheme highlights the knowledge that became known through mental consolidation of experience, intellect and Buddhist teachings. P004 considers tuning in to be the whole process of counseling and of life as well. This is an insight because P004 was able to take this learning experience and integrate it with the perspective of life to determine that the process of tuning in is a valuable one in all aspects of life. Tuning in is the process of letting go of the attachment of self and integrating into another’s view, which is also applicable in people outside of counseling as well, whether it is your family, co-workers, or strangers. To have the ability to understand others, while practicing emptiness, letting go of self, becomes a routine of peace and interconnectedness in others and yourself. Hence, Buddhist counselors are encouraged to understand the nature of self and the world to become an insightful Buddhist counselor.

‘**Mindfulness**’ subtheme is different than self-awareness in terms of its practice as mindfulness conveys less thought and more of an experience. Informants identify mindfulness as the constant practice of self-observation with mental and physical fluctuations. The practice of mindfulness is considered by many informants to accelerate the process of learning as Buddhist counselors since TIR model is required for counselors to become aware of very refined feelings and emotions and how they fluctuate encountering internal and external stimuli. As such, throughout the process of overcoming conflicting value, the practice of self-awareness during training and with clients translates into the daily life practices of mindfulness and some informants towards meditation and traditional practice of Buddhism as well. They considered Buddhist counseling and practice to be interchangeable and essential to progress in personal and professional life. Therefore, mindfulness practice becomes a pre-requisite towards gaining insight and experience emptiness. Mindfulness is the key to teachings of Buddhism.

‘**Impermanence**’ is first key point in three marks of existence. Informants reported experiencing this phenomenon after overcoming conflicting value because they experience the changes of emotions, thoughts, values and self, where nothing are always consistent. Everything is subjected to change by nature, and the attachment one feels towards themselves and others, is the cause of suffering. Moreover, impermanence is the ability to accept that no one can wake up and feel great every day. Everyone is subjected to having a good and bad day, and counselors are no exceptions. To accept and adjust one’s own expectations, one can be free to be mindful of the present and move forward with what is at disposal, instead of trying to force something that isn’t there, or being disappointed for things to not happen the same as yesterday. Therefore, impermanence as learning from conflicting value is the acceptance and understanding in human nature as subjected to changing, for self and others. This allows informants to become at ease in knowing that they are not the scale that measures the right and wrong, but rather that the right and wrong of everyone is their own and is also subjected to change as well.

Conclusion and Discussion

According to the analysis, the result shows that there is a struggle in finding solutions towards conflicting value, but there are clear signs of struggle and continues in cycle until the initial awareness beings. This pattern resembles Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) in highlighting various struggles in different stages of development for counselors, which requires certain factors or assistance to break the cycle. The diagram in *Table 3* illustrates the journey of learnings that results from the break in conflicting value cycle that allow counselors to grow and experience Buddhist teachings along with the efficacy of Buddhist counseling.



Picture 1 Conflicting Value diagram

The initial stage consists of Interaction with Conflicting value, Effects to Performance, and Consequence themes have been portrayed as a cycle of struggle for counselors who have minimal experience with conflicting value. Buddhist counselors are stuck in a perpetual loop of negative experience and outcome during the session, despite adjusting their methods and understandings. Every informant reported being unaware of conflicting value at this stage and rather perceiving the fault to be from the client rather than themselves. From this study, conflicting values appear to materialize the attachment of self to the surface, and cause disruption during the session. Buddhist counselors-in-training are the most likely candidate to be trapped in the initial stage due to the unawareness of attachments. In Buddhist teachings, the self is formed through individual's values, desires and needs but all these factors are the cause of suffering (Dalai Lama, 1995). As one attributes to one's own values, desires and needs, the attempt to maintain and fend off against anything that might come to threat with 'self' could create rifts, pain, and negative consequences when one's desire has not been fulfilled (Chu & Vu, 2021). As Buddhist counselors-in-training, every trainee has certain sets of expectations on how Buddhist counselors should perform, how clients should react, and how the sessions should go. Expectations would only add to the attachment that creates the image of self that tightens the bond of this dilemma and prolongs the cycle.

The Process stage begins as Buddhist counselors seek supervision and became aware of conflicting value to start the process of self-reflection. The journey of self-exploration in this stage, started with supervision, but Buddhist counselors must carry on their own work. According to the Four Noble Truth, this step is considered as suffering and cause of suffering, to become mindful of suffering in its shape and form, to notice how conflicting value has influenced various negative emotions and examine the factor that reinforces these emotions. Identifying the cause of suffering is the ability to realize that being attached to those ideals and sense of self are the cause

of perpetual negative emotions. However, the attachments won't immediately go away, they slowly dissipate as Buddhist counselors continually increase self-awareness and understanding of their own attachments.

As attachments become lighter, the mind offers new insights into causes of conflicting value such as the inability to perceive frustration in their first conflicting value sessions, which leads to possible harm to the client. After these realizations, positive traits may appear such as acceptance and boundlessness. Similarly to the concept of acceptance mentioned by De Silva (2000) is to be mindful of non-acceptance and acceptance, to neither reject nor accept the premise, which coincides with how informants mentioned that acceptance is the ability to become mindful of personal and client's value. Buddhist counselors begin to perceive self and others in a different light, to gain understanding of the causes and effects as attachment of self grows thinner. Buddhist counselors become mindful of the possible traps laid by self-attachment, and with practice learn to avoid and refocus back to the clients.

Integration stage entails the lessons taught in conflicting value process starts to provide Buddhist counselors with valuable Buddhist teachings which creates positive feedback cycle in the process stage as less attachment improves the efficacy of Buddhist counselors in the notion such as emptiness. The reason emptiness is seen to be one of the key takeaways of this process is that the state of emptiness is achieved through having a lighter attachment to self, and the further one practices towards less attachment, the more frequent that individual would experience the sense of emptiness that exhibits the mind and allows for an effective counseling session.

The process stage and integration stage can be considered as the cessation of suffering and the path to cessation of suffering in the four noble truths due to the nature of overcoming certain obstacles and furthering that path through practice. Nevertheless, the four noble truths contain layers of progress. Despite learning and experiencing an onset, the progress of four

noble truths can be multitudes deeper until enlightenment is achieved. Hence, this marks the starting point of Buddhist practice and by no means entailing that Buddhist counselors may achieve enlightenment through conflicting value process.

Research Ethics

Ethical approval will be obtained before the interviews begin from Chulalongkorn University, Study Title no. 650211 COA no. 105/66. All informants will be given the right to withdraw at any time they wish, and all data is kept and analyzed confidentially. Only the researcher and supervisor will know the details of the informants, and names will be changed to pseudonyms in the paper for confidential purposes.

New Body of Knowledge

The experience of conflicting value shows numerous correlations between Buddhist counseling and Buddhist teachings. The state of emptiness that Buddhist counselors experience after overcoming conflicting value is the same ideal condition for Buddhist counselors to be in for the start of ‘Tuning in’ in TIR model, which portrays a crucial learning point. Furthermore, the progression of attachment to self and non-self that enables Buddhist counselors to breakthrough the conflicting value blockade resembles the Four Noble truth in Buddhist teachings. That progression allows for the understanding of three marks of existence as awareness of values and attachments weakened. Therefore, the training of Buddhist counseling provides a unique opportunity for individuals to have first-hand experience in facing difficulty situations and given guidelines to witness the flourishing of the mind through a profound framework of Buddhist teachings. In short, one of many paths that lead to set oneself free from attachment and suffering



Picture 2 Summary of implication of conflicting value process

Suggestions of Research

Conflicting value process diagram was created from the information provided by experienced Buddhist counselors that clearly outline the experience in facing conflicting value from being counselor-in-training to experienced professional. This process could be of use to current Buddhist counseling practitioners and counselors-in-training as a guide to keep progressing professionally and personally as well.

The area of studies that could further this research can be done in several areas such as conflicting value in other approaches, more in-depth study in non-self and counseling, and the attachment to self.

1. Counselors should encounter conflicting values one way or another but may have been called a different name in other approaches. To find a broader process and solution to this issue, another study could be in from a different approach, such as CBT, ACT or Person-centered therapy to illustrate the process undergone by trainees to experienced counselors, the journey that has been taken and the way to get there. This study can be useful to counselor-in-training and new counselors in other approaches as well as Buddhist counseling.

2. In this study, the notion of non-self and emptiness have been mentioned constantly and shown great relevance to the practice of counseling. However, this study did not fully capture its practice and benefits to counseling, which would be greatly beneficial for Buddhist counseling approach.

3. Buddhist supervisors can use this study to explore the experience of current Buddhist counselor-in-training, and compare the similarities and differences, to eventually create a curriculum or training that can be most suited for Buddhist counselor-in-training to practice and understand encountering with conflicting value.

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