

**The role of Nonviolent Communication in addressing power:  
How practising Nonviolent Communication affects power  
expression in the workplace relationships  
– some examples in Viet Nam**

**By  
Nguyen Truong Bao Khuyen**

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Finally, I save some honour for myself to keep moving with Nonviolent Communication in my journey of people development and social change.

## **Abstract**

This study addresses the magnitude and impacts of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) in the expression of power in workplace relationships. It adopts the methods of surveys, group discussions and in-depth interviews with twenty practitioners from the civil society and across business sectors in Vietnam. Participants reported improved self-compassion, empathy, communication and collaboration with others after starting NVC practice. In terms of power expression, less harmful communication among participants and in peer-to-peer situations was employed, while the use of violent language toward participants could be minimised. The majority of participants have had more positive thoughts and behaviours to meet their needs ('power-within'). They also tended to stop intimidating others ('power-over') to satisfy their own needs. Over half of the respondents shared stories about empowering others ('power-to') and collaboration with others ('power-with') in problem-solving (Kashtan 2002; Rosengbert 2015). Findings speak for a change in addressing legitimate power and hegemonic social norms and bias and show that people's freedom in interactions among different relationships is reinforced, therefore it is crucial for international development to liberate the people from the power within which they struggle. In the context of global issues which require the collaboration between political, economic, and civil societies, NVC may initiate constructive social criticism. Ultimately, practising NVC is crucial for organisations to promote collective wisdom to meet the needs of individuals as a significant contributors through the organisations' missions in fulfilling the planet's needs. Finally, this research may expand its significance in the future by further investigating the impact of 'expert power' on the practicing NVC.



## Declaration

I, *Nguyen Truong Bao Khuyen*, do declare that this research is my original work and has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have endeavoured to reference correctly all literature and sources used in this work. I recognise that the onus is on me to ensure that this work is fully compliant with academic honesty.

In light of the above, I acknowledge that ownership of the intellectual property rights contained herein stays with me as the author. I acknowledge that this dissertation is the property of Maynooth University, and therefore can be deposited and shared online through the Maynooth University library and used by the Department of International Development at Maynooth University for publication or other teaching purposes.

Signed

Date: September 26, 2019

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nguyen Truong Bao Khuyen', written over a horizontal line.

Word Count: [19,985]

## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

FDI	Foreign Direct Investors
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	Non-government organisation
NVC	Non-violent communication
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1. Introduction.**

This thesis is about “The role of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) in addressing power: How practising NVC affects power expression in the workplace relationships – some examples in Viet Nam.”

Power is the capability to create expected changes (Clegg 1989; Beetham *et al.* 2008). Power is also the property on which a person relies to create change in each relationship (French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009; Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012). Power properties refer to the beliefs, ‘personal power’, ‘expert power’, ‘rewards power’, ‘positional power’, ‘legitimate power’, ‘coercive power’, culture and ideologies (Gaventa 2006; French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009). By using power expression (Gaventa 2006), a person may use his or her power property to create changes in different ways. The four types of power expression, according to Gaventa (2006), are ‘Power-over’, ‘Power-within’, ‘Power-with’, and ‘Power-to’ (Gaventa 2006). ‘Power-over’ is where one tries to intimidate others (Gaventa 2006) and therefore refers to violence as it causes physical or emotional harm (Leory 1974). ‘Power-within’ is the sense of self-esteem, self-worth, self-acceptance and possibility (Gaventa 2006). ‘Power-to’ and ‘Power-with’ are the way one builds capability for others and takes action with others, respectively (Gaventa 2006). ‘Power-within’, ‘Power-with’, and ‘Power-to’ are instrumentals in bringing empowerment (Chambers 2006).

Power is located in the heart of social relationships (Foucault and Gordon 1980; Reeler 2007), of which the quality of the relationships could free or unfree people within that society (Reeler 2007; The Barefoot Collective 2009). Relationships include interactions of one with oneself, one with other people and one with the world (Reeler 2007). If a person does not esteem himself/herself, he/she may be oppressed by others and limited in other political rights (Reeler 2007). Violent relationships could not accumulate to a sustainable world (The Barefoot Collective 2009). “A change in relationships can be a catalyst for and a result of social change” (The Barefoot Collective 2015:82). Changing relationships leads to changing in power (Reeler 2007), or good relationships address power (Leslie and Groves 2004; The Barefoot Collective 2011). Therefore, building good relationships could transform power, bring freedom and build social well-being.

Nonviolent communication (NVC) is an approach to build honest and empathic relationships in which everyone can fulfil their needs (Rosenberg 2015). NVC believes that all human behaviours are to meet the underlying needs (Rosenberg 2015; Kashtan and Kashtan n.d), and people only resort to violence because they think that is the only possibility to fulfil their needs (Kashtan and Kashtan n.d). NVC also promotes intrapersonal relationships, interpersonal relationships, and even the relationships with the political policies and cultural factors by liberating the internal conflicts, cultivating empathy and bringing consciousness into our choices to fulfil the needs for all relevant stakeholders (Rosenberg 2003; Rosenberg 2005; Rosenberg 2015). NVC shares the need-based approach in development, which debates that basic human needs are universal (Max-Neef 1992; Rosenberg 2015). All needs are equally important (Max-Neef *et al.* 1989), and there are many ways to achieve a need (Max-Neef *et al.* 1989; Rosenberg 2015). Needs can be fulfilled at a personal level, group level or environmental level (Max-Neef *et al.* 1989).

In light of universal needs in communication, NVC states that human beings are all the same in yearning for need fulfilment (Rosenberg 2015) and allows people to move beyond the conflicting communication zone where judging, blaming, demanding, labelling and comparing disconnect people from each other (Krzisnik 2013; Rosenberg 2015). NVC activates the empathy in people so that they are able to touch to the happiness and sorrow caused by fulfilled and unfulfilled needs, respectively (Rosenberg 2015). In the domain of feelings and needs, it enables people to accept the common humanity and develop the kindness to support each other (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015). As soon as the good intention is settled, positive possibilities can be unlocked (The Barefoot Collective 2009) and ‘power-over’ becomes unnecessary.

This research seeks to identify if NVC could help people to address the expression of power in workplaces. In particular, it attempts to figure out if practitioners could develop their power-within; or shift from ‘power-over’ to ‘power-with’ and ‘power-to’. The workplace is where organisations operate to achieve its mission (Russell 1975; The Barefoot Collective 2009). Power existing within organisational relationships can be seen as a micro model of the broader social hierarchy where people are impacted by power properties. On top of that, organisations are subsystems of societies and play essential roles in social development (The Barefoot Collective 2009; The Barefoot Collective 2011).

## **1.2. Social relationships and development**

Society is “made up of the three interacting spheres, namely, civil society, government and business” (The Barefoot Collective 2015, p.12). Each sphere includes the subset of individuals and organisations (Giddens 1997; The Barefoot Collective 2017) and has its own role. The role of the economic sphere is to organise society to work together so that people can fulfil their needs (The Barefoot

Collective 2015). The role of the political sphere is to ensure the equality of all human relations (The Barefoot Collective 2015). The civil society is the cultural sphere where people generate knowledge, meaning and develop the capability to engage in political and economic life (The Barefoot Collective 2015). The interaction among these spheres manifest the social relationships as part of social capital, which contributes to the overall social well-being (Willis 2011). The healthier social relationships are, the better social well-being. “Society gets stuck when any one of the three becomes too dominant to the point where they are no longer fulfilling their unique purpose” (The Barefoot Collective 2015, p.12). As a consequence, a social crisis can happen (The Barefoot Collective 2015).

Looking back at the economic development in the world in Figure 1.1 below. Society 1.0 was led by the ‘coercive power’ of the State, Society 2.0 – neoliberalism was driven by the ‘reward power’ and promoted the dominating role of the economic sector. Neoliberalism revealed many disadvantages in human development (Willis 2011) so that civil society engaged more in Society Model 3.0. Although more and more actors are involved in the global growth, human beings are facing more challenges than ever because of the disconnection in relationship with Self, with others and with Nature (Scharmer and Kaufer 2013; Macy and Brown 2014). Among these disconnections, the disconnection between people and people could be responsible for a global crisis such as, but not limited to, famines, inequality, and refugee crises (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992; Gaventa 2003; Scharmer and Senge 2009; Hardoon et al. 2016; Scharmer 2016). According to the Tri Hita Karana sustainable development forum, ten out of the seventeen sustainable development goals belongs to the group of connection between people (Tri Hita Karana Forum 2018). It is time when we really need to tap deeper into our source of humanity and evolve the sense of the new “we” (Scharmer and Kaufer 2013; Scharmer 2016; Zaki 2019a; Zaki 2019b)

	Primary societal challenge	Response: coordination mechanism	Primary sector/ players	Primary source of power	Dominant ideology	Primary state of consciousness
Society 1.0: State-Driven, Mercantilism, Socialism	Stability	Commanding: hierarchy	State/ government	Coercive (sticks)	Mercantilism; socialism (state-centric thought)	Traditional awareness
Society 2.0: Free-Market-Driven, Laissez-Faire	Growth	Competing: markets	Capital/business; state/government	Remunerative (carrots)	Neoliberal and neoclassic (market-centric) thought	Ego-system awareness
Society 3.0: Stakeholder-Driven, Social-Market Economy	Negative domestic externalities	Negotiating: stakeholder dialogue	Civil society/ NGOs; capital/ business; state/ government	Normative (values)	Social democratic or progressive thought	Stakeholder awareness
Society 4.0: Eco-System Driven, Co-Creative Economy	Global disruptive externalities, resilience	Presencing: awareness-based collective action (ABC)	Cross-sector co-creation: civil society/NGOs; capital/business; state/government	Awareness: actions that arise from seeing the emerging whole	Eco-system-centric thought	Eco-system awareness

Figure 1-1 - The challenge – response Model of Economic Revolution

Source: (Scharmer and Kaufer 2013)

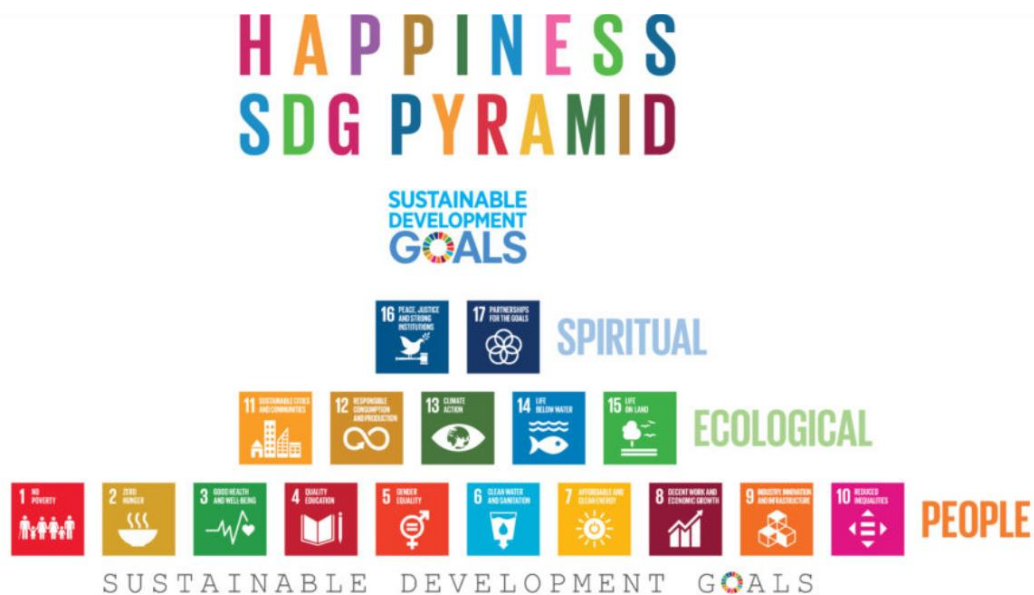


Figure 1-2 - SDG Pyramid

Source: Tri Hita Karana Forum (2018)

It is challenging to separate human's needs, and the planet's needs as that is the whole interdependent scheme of life (Rosenberg 2004; Scharmer and Senge 2009; The Barefoot Collective 2011; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013; The Barefoot Collective 2011). Therefore, the Social Model 4.0 requests the co-creation of interdependent individuals, organisations and societies (The Barefoot Collective 2011; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013; The Barefoot Collective 2019). In this regard, the organisation plays vital role because it could mobilise the collective power which individuals cannot do alone (The Barefoot Collective 2009). It is the time for organisations, and their leaders critically reflect their mission and their interaction in the whole planet's well-being (Rosenberg 2004; The Barefoot Collective 2009). Organisations are where people can fulfil their needs rather than merely money, position and status (Rosenberg 2004).

### **1.3. Background of social relationships in Viet Nam**

Over thirty years of implementing free market policies, Viet Nam has achieved certain positive results in the economy. Poverty has fallen sharply, and the country has moved from the low-income to the lower-middle-income country (World Bank and Viet Nam 2016). Gender equality is a social achievement (World Bank and Viet Nam 2016). However, the social-economic development reveals many political and social problems including corruption and poor governance (World Bank and Viet Nam 2016; CECODES *et al.* 2019) which leads to severe climate change (World Bank and Viet Nam 2016; IMF 2017; CECODES *et al.* 2019), inequality (World Bank and Viet Nam 2016; Lam 2017; CECODES *et al.* 2019) and the high possibility of re-emerging poverty (Binh *et al.* 2016).

A recent research shows that the civil society space in Viet Nam is narrow and strictly controlled by the State; one of the causes for this is the unequal relationship civil society has with the State in Viet Nam (Phong and Binh 2013; Binh *et al.*



2016). It is challenging to establish NGOs because the State in Viet Nam maintains the ‘ask-give’ mechanism towards the civil society sector (Binh *et al.* 2016). Without a legally recognised status and support from the government, the opportunity for NGOs to raise funds from the business is limited (Binh *et al.* 2016). Prisoners of Conscience; lack of press freedom; individuals’ freedom of expressions and activities are evidence of human rights violations in Viet Nam (Ministry of Public Security Viet Nam 2005; Binh *et al.* 2016; Amnesty International 2018; UN Human Rights Council 2019). (Binh *et al.* 2016; Amnesty International 2018; UN Human Right Council 2019). There are many social critics in which those expressing satire and verbal insults towards the government could find their rights are at stake at any time (Binh *et al.* 2016). Rationalist critiques are emerging but remain limited (Binh *et al.* 2016).

In 2016, the Vietnamese-Austrian sociologist Dang Hoang Giang published the book “The Good, the Evil and Smartphone” explaining how Vietnamese use violence to fight against the wrongdoings on behalf of justice (Grapevinen 2017). Dang (2016) highlighted that although physical violence did not happen, verbal violence still existed. Dang mentioned the Vietnamese had become short tempered, more aggressive and less tolerant toward each other. It indicates that doing good but using a violent manner could deepen social conflicts.

In conclusion, besides the organisational accountability, Viet Nam also needs collaboration among sectors in building sustainable development. NVC could be a possible connecting tool as it refrains people from blaming (Rosenberg 2015). By working on our openness to others, we can connect with ourselves and others at the heart level (Rosenberg 2004), and convert anger into compassion (Kashtan 2015; Krzysnik 2018).

#### **1.4. The rationale for the choice of topic**

NVC enables possibilities for people to fulfil their needs (Rosenberg 2015). It could also be used to enhance the relationships by transforming a ‘zero-sum game’ to an understanding, connecting and cooperating alliance (Rosenberg 2015).

Worldwide, NVC serves “as a valuable resource for communities facing violent conflicts and severe ethnic, religious, or political tensions” (Rosenberg 2003, p.20). This tool has been used and proven effective in a variety of settings like schools, healthcare centres, prisons, and restorative and rehabilitative institutions. There are many publications about the application in different settings such as education, medical, marriage, criminal (Kashtan 2002; Young 2011; Suarez *et al.* 2014; Nosek and Durán 2017). Notably, recent research shows that NVC increases empathy in female Syrian refugees (Alshughry 2018).

In Viet Nam, some organisations have used NVC in their development practices, an expert working with minor ethnic groups shared that:

*The authority officers owing ‘positional power’ sometimes overuse their authority which leads to ‘Power-over’. The “ask-give” mechanism reinforces the ‘Power-over’. These unfortunate examples impact negatively on the beliefs of the people, so they take ‘Power-over’ as granted. My project uses NVC, together with other tools, in power shifting. We equip the minor ethnics with the awareness of their rights so that they could enhance their ‘Power-within’ and ‘Power-with’. NVC could help them create a dialogue with the authorities in development progress. Therefore, NVC could be a useful tool to transform power without a violent revolution (a member from Tien Phong project)*

The use of NVC in the workplace is found to be relatively rare (Bhalerao and Kumar 2015; Museux *et al.* 2016; Wacker and Dziobek 2018). Specifically, I have not found any research on the nonviolent approaches in Viet Nam.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

The research aims to answer the following core question: to what extent and in what way does NVC help practitioners address the expressions of power in different levels of the workplace relationships?

In detail, the research tries to address the following aspects with the support of sub-questions:

- In the relationship with Self: If the practitioners could build the Power-within in terms of having more self-compassion toward themselves? How do they change their feelings about themselves in work?
- In the relationship with Others: how do practitioners change their communication pattern with others? How are their relationships at work and problem-solving impacted from that? How do people use power in communication? How do they deal with people having more power resources than them?
- In the relationship with Organisations: how do people deal with legitimate power and implicit culture (Blau 1986; Clegg 1989; Wrong 1995) which impacts upon their unmet needs?

### **1.6. Conclusion**

Sustainable social change needs to happen from individual to the community and to policies; from local to global landscape (The Barefoot Collective 2015). At the individual level, abusers and victims need to change their feelings about themselves rather than how they should behave (The Barefoot Collective 2015). Activists and leaders need the courage to move beyond cynicism (Rosenberg 2004; Rosenberg 2005; Scharmer and Senge 2009; Kashtan 2015). At the community level, the key to break the violent circle and create a peaceful social change is not to look at

whoever may be doing terrible things as enemy (Rosenberg 2004; Rosenberg 2005; Kashtan 2015; Krzysnik 2018); or use ‘power-over’ tactics including punishment, reward, guilt, shame, duty and obligation to justify human’s behaviours (Rosenberg 2004). Instead, building the connection with them by looking deeply into their feelings and their needs to see what they try to offer to life (Rosenberg 2004). At the policy level, sustainable changes must go deeper than laws and policies and be rooted within needs-based analysis where relevant parties could have their needs met (The Barefoot Collective 2015).

To create cohesion, inclusion and well-being for the planet, Social Model 4.0 requests the collaboration across civil society, political society and economic society at all scales (Scharmer and Kaufer 2013; The Barefoot Collective 2017; The Barefoot Collective 2019). Moreover, the boundary between the business and civil society nowadays is blurred (Keeton 2011). More and more civil society agencies develop more business-like ways of operation (Keeton 2011); while social responsibility is increasingly embraced in business (Keeton 2011). In that context, an ideal social structure starts from life-enriching organisations in which both human needs and environmental ones are fulfilled (Rosenberg 2004). In the ideal organisation, people are “more interdependent and participative, more humane, less hierarchical and competitive” (The Barefoot Collective 2009:11)

Many ideal organisations have been emerging (Beck and Cowan 2014; Laloux 2014). Therefore, we could hope for the further possibility of NVC in building an environment of honesty, empathy and need fulfilment for all.

This research will evaluate if NVC could contribute to problem-solving, enhance relationships and transform the expressions of power at different levels at workplaces. The findings of this research could provide further insights into the implementation of a grassroots nonviolent approach in social change.

Chapter two focuses on the literature review of power, violence, human needs, social relationship and NVC. The chapter goes through different types of power resources and power expressions; in what way power is violence. Additionally, the chapter illustrates on what background NVC is able to transform violence into nonviolence in different levels of social relationships.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review**

This chapter focuses on theories about power, different forms of power, social relationships at different levels and NVC. It illustrates how NVC operates at different levels of social relationships and how its usage creates possibilities for power transformation from intimidation to empowerment.

#### **2.1. Power**

The word ‘power’ is often associated with concepts such as ‘influence’, ‘authority’, ‘control’, ‘force’ ‘dominance’, and ‘strength’ (Wrong 1995; Lukes 2005; Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012). Each concept reflects a different perspective on power.

Gibson (1971) states that power is the facility to make things happen (cited in Clegg 1989) or power is the ability to achieve the expected change (Beetham *et al.* 2008). In these lenses, power is considered as strength, ability, capability, competence and creativity (cited in McKinney and Shanley 1985; Lukes 2005).

In the human dynamic, Blau and Dahl refer to power as all kinds of influence between persons or groups where one induces others to conduct as one’s wishes (Dahl 1961; Blau 1986; Lukes 1986). Even more, it is the “human beings’ ability to influence or control the thoughts, behaviours, and actions of others” (Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012:2). This influence is intended and foreseen (Wrong 1979).

Power is a dynamic because it shifts within, between and among individuals and population groups or social institutions in different contexts and at different times

(Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012). Specifically, in the workplace, even a State or a company involves some redistribution of power, which makes power different from the social context (Russell 1975). For example, role requirements may impact human behaviours in terms of how he or she must take actions in which some of his/her needs are unmet. Besides, the workplace regulations or punishment may distract employees from the value of their action because they focus on the consequence instead (Rosenberg 2015). Fear of punishment diminishes self-esteem and goodwill (Rosenberg 2015).

Power is exercised at the interpersonal, community, national, international or global levels (Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012).

NVC emphasises both the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship in verbal communication. Therefore, this study on NVC focuses on the ability of people to achieve the changes they want. Changes may come from within a person, or in the interaction between a person and other people.

There are many aspects of power, such as space of power, faces of power, or types of power (Gaventa 2006). The research concentrates on the following three aspects of the power because it is more relevant to the workplace.

#### **2.1.1. Source of power**

According to Gaventa (2006), source of power mentions different resources from which people have more ability to conduct changes or to create the influence on others. Resource power could be, but not limited to, ‘reward power’; ‘personal power’; ‘expert power’; ‘coercive power’; culture and thoughts. Each type of power resource is described as below:

1. 'Reward power' refers to the material rewards or benefits such as money, promotion, or gifts which one person relies upon in their relationship with others (French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009; Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012)
2. 'Personal power' is the personal capability to attract others, create a network, and build relationship and loyalty (French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009).
3. 'Expert power' means the power when a person holds the knowledge, skills and experience which an organisation needs (French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009).
4. 'Coercive power' is the application of the fear-based influence to get obedience from others (French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009; Wrong 1995). 'Coercive power' may resource the physical force or any forms of above powers to manipulate others (French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009). 'Coercive power' is a form of 'power-over' which triggers the resentment and resistance from others (The Barefoot Collective 2009) Rosenberg (2015) suggests that force should be only used for protective purpose, and only when a dialogue for mutual agreement could not happen, and it is necessary to protect life and human rights (Rosenberg 2015).
5. Positions of power or 'positional power' describe in which context people hold more power to create change (Wrong 1995; Gaventa 2006) or making-decision (Polsby 1980; Lukes 2005). 'Positional power' is usually the official authority which a person owns from his or her position in a hierarchical organisation or society (Clegg 1989; French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009). The authority usually is backed up by legitimate power including regulations, laws (Blau 1986; Wrong 1995) or the constitution of ideologies (Mintzberg 1983 cited in Clegg 1989; Blau



1986). The ideologies include the organisational culture, social values or social norms. This is the political relationship between the subordinate and superior, which is only broken when everyone is equal (Wrong 1995).

### **2.1.2. Expression of power**

Gaventa (2006) states that there are four types of power expression:

1. 'Power-over' or dependent power is the way a person dominates or controls over other people (Blau 1986; Lukes 1986; Rowlands 1997; Gaventa 2006; Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012). It is the zero-sum view in which the more power one person has, the less power the others hold. Power-over may be a response to compliance, resistance, or manipulation (Rowlands 1997; The Barefoot Collective 2009; Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012). 'Power-over' almost constrains the freedom of the subordinate party (Wrong 1995)
2. 'Power-to' is the productive power which makes people create change by engaging, developing knowledge and skills. 'Power-to' is based on the belief that the bigger cake could be created by the enhancement of everyone's capability (Rowlands 1997; Gaventa 2006). Coming to 'Power-to', power indicates a 'capacity', a 'facility, or an 'ability' (Lukes 2005)
3. 'Power-with' is the interdependent power (The Barefoot Collective 2009). 'Power-with' happens when people make a change from working together (Gaventa 2006) to bring about changes for the collective goals (Parsons 1967; Lukes 2005), or to create a whole which is greater than the sum of individuals, especially when groups solve problems together (Williams *et al.* 1994; Rowlands 1997; The Barefoot Collective 2009). It is the collective agent and resources to achieve the collective goal (Arendt 1970; McKinney and Shanley 1985; Lukes 1986; Rowlands 1997; Lukes 2005). Therefore,

power does not mean a zero-sum game (Wrong 1995), and ‘power-with’ can, of course, help transform ‘Power-over’ (Eyben *et al.* 2006).

4. Power from within or ‘Power-within’ is a form of independent power (The Barefoot Collective 2009). It is positive beliefs about self-esteem, self-worth (Gaventa 2006; The Barefoot Collective 2009). ‘Power-within’ enables people to believe that they are resourceful, their life is worth, and their voice is valuable (The Barefoot Collective 2017). Power from within roots from the sense of self-acceptance, self-respect to accept and respect others in return as equal (Williams *et al.* 1994; Rowlands 1997; The Barefoot Collective 2009). With ‘power-within’, people feel full abilities and capable to take purposive actions (Rowlands 1997; Chambers 2006)

### **2.1.3. Acquisition and Maintenance of Power**

Power is acquired and maintained in either force or manipulation (Galbraith 1983; Wrong 1995; Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012). The former relates to the threat of violence; the latter links to the cultural process in which people internalise the social bias and norms created by the superiors (Galbraith 1983; Wrong 1995). Social bias and norms “operates systematically to benefit for certain groups and people at the expense of others” (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992:14). These social norms are hegemonic discourses which shape and adjust people’s desires and beliefs so that they do not have grievances and they accept being oppressed as the status quo (Lukes 1986; Bachrach and Botwinick 1992; Wrong 1995; Gutting 2005; Lukes 2005; Gramsci 2010). As a consequence, power subverts and thwarts them in their pursuit of their ultimate goals (Lukes 1986).

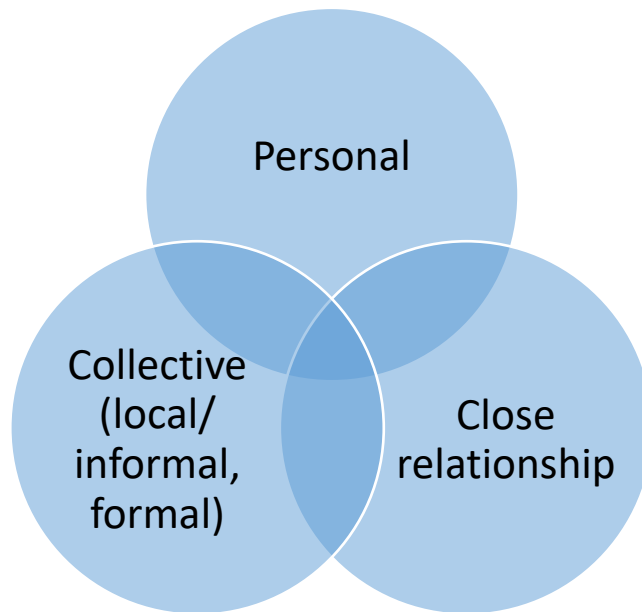
#### **2.1.4. Commentary on Power**

From the different aspects mentioned above, we could see that having power and exercising power differentiate power as a property and a relation (Eyben *et al.* 2006). As a relation, power locates in the heart of human relationship (Foucault and Gordon 1980; Reeler 2007; The Barefoot Collective 2015). “Without relationship, power means little; it has no force” (Reeler 2007: 33). Therefore, exercising power creates more meaning and impacts than having power. In particular, ‘expert power’ or ‘personal power’ is ‘Power-within’, which could be negatively shifted to ‘Power-over’ in some cases (The Barefoot Collective 2009). For example, some people could be regarded as an expert while they have their choice to reveal their sense of ‘expert power’ or resist it because they believe other staff should acknowledge their ‘Power-within’ through their own strengths and resources (Kimmage Development Studies Centre 2012). In contrast, an actor could take advantage of his position to carry out his own will or control over resources despite the resistance of his relevant stakeholders (Clegg 1979; Weber 1979; Lukes 1986). However, this ‘Power-over’ suggests the potential hostility, conflict and oppression in human relation (Wrong 1995). From the social aspect, in Marxism, “the inherent inequality of power relations creates a sense of inferiority and resentment for subordinators. Because power is relational, creating and maintaining the structure of social bonds, power differences are more consequential than inequalities in wealth and prestige” (Wrong 1995: 250). According to Hobbes, ‘Power-over’ others is never securely won because all men are ultimately equal in terms of the ability to kill and despoil one another (cited in Wrong 1995). A man sometimes could use forces or wiles to master all the people he can, but such power relations are unstable for there are very few foolish who is willing to be governed by others (cited in Wrong 1995). People want to govern themselves (cited in Wrong 1995). Therefore, they will make the counter power in the power struggle (Foucault and Gordon 1980; Dreyfus and

Rabinow 1982; Rowlands 1997). The counter power, as stated by Bachrach and Baratz (1968), could create a force which leads the person having the decision-making power to hold space for his or her decision and change the existing allocation of benefits (cited in Lukes 2005). Otherwise, the mass participation from below can effectively combat the social bias and norms (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992). In the fight for freedom, the victims or subordinates may seek to replace the power holder (Wrong 1995) or to claim their 'Power-over' others (Reeler 2007). Alternatively, they could free themselves by claiming their inner power; claiming their power with others (Reeler 2007); or enlarging their own range of free choice (Wrong 1995).

#### **2.1.5. Empowerment**

Besides making themselves free, people also could be freed by a more positive process – empowerment. Empowerment is used to communicate with good intention in the distribution of power (Rowlands 1997). Empowerment also mentions the acquisition of power or mobilisation of the collective power of previously isolated actors (Wrong 1995), or enhancement of the capacity of individuals or groups to make purposive choices and desired outcome (Chambers 2006). Empowerment is to involve one person or a group of people from the outside position into the decision-making process (Rowlands 1997). It relates to 'Power-with', 'Power-within' and 'Power-to' (Rowlands 1997). In 'Power-to' and 'Power-with', people become aware of their own interests in line with the interests of others so that both participate a greater strength in decision making (Rowlands 1997; Chambers 2006). 'Empower-to' and 'empower-within' give people the full human abilities and potential so that they can see themselves being capable and having rights to take actions and influence (Rowlands 1997).



*Figure 2-1 - Three dimensions of empowerment*

*Source: Rowlands (1997)*

Empowerment operates in three dimensions:

- Personal builds the sense of self, individual and confidence, dissolves the sense of being oppressed (Rowlands 1997) and this dimension relates to 'Power-within'.
- Relational “develops the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it” (Rowlands 1997: 15), and this dimension relates to 'Power-to' and 'Power-with'.
- Collective takes collective actions to achieve a more intensive impact than each individual could (Rowlands 1997), and this dimension relates to 'Power-with'.

#### **2.1.6. Power as Violence**

Among four types of power expression, 'power-over' is considered as violence for the following two reasons.

(1) Violence is an action that injures another living being, physical or psychological (Leory 1974). ‘Power-over’ is where people use their power resources to manipulate or oppress others, which causes physical or emotional pain.

(2) Feinberg (1986) states that violence is any harm or offense that violates others’ interests (cited in Hirsch 1986). In this perspective, ‘power-over’ goes against the will and violates the freedom of others.

“If violence becomes an institutionalised form of power, as in Haiti, it creates continuous instability and injustice” (Eyben *et al.* 2006)

Communication could be violence if it hurts or injures others or oneself (Rosenberg 2015). Different forms of communication which cause emotional harms could include, but not limited to (1) demanding others to fulfil our needs despite their unwillingness (Sullivan 2007; Krzysnik 2013); (2) comparing someone is worthier than the others; (3) blaming on the actions, thoughts, or feelings; (4) labelling or diagnosing; and (5) making moralistic judgments and evaluations which imply right and wrong, good and bad (Krzysnik 2013). Violence in language may be harmful to any party in the society, especially in war and conflict context (Dwivedi 2017). Researchers prove that where the language was used to classify people as “good” or “bad”, level of physical behaviours was higher than where language focused more on needs and actions (Harvey 1961). Verbal violence exists in gender conflict (Fawcett et al. 1996), politic conflict (Cromer 2004) or social conflict (Avtgis and Rancer 2010). Verbal violence links to physical violence (Silva 2017). Even if verbal violence does not progress to physical violence, it still could cause adverse consequences in the form of emotion to suffer and disconnections on the level of the society as well as individuals (Leyden 1990; Young 2011).

### **2.1.7. Summary**

In summary, the power holder could use their power resources toward themselves and others in four types. Among them, ‘Power-within’, ‘Power-with’ and ‘Power-to’ could empower people. In contrast, ‘Power-over’ is a violent form which harms people and causes deeper social conflicts.

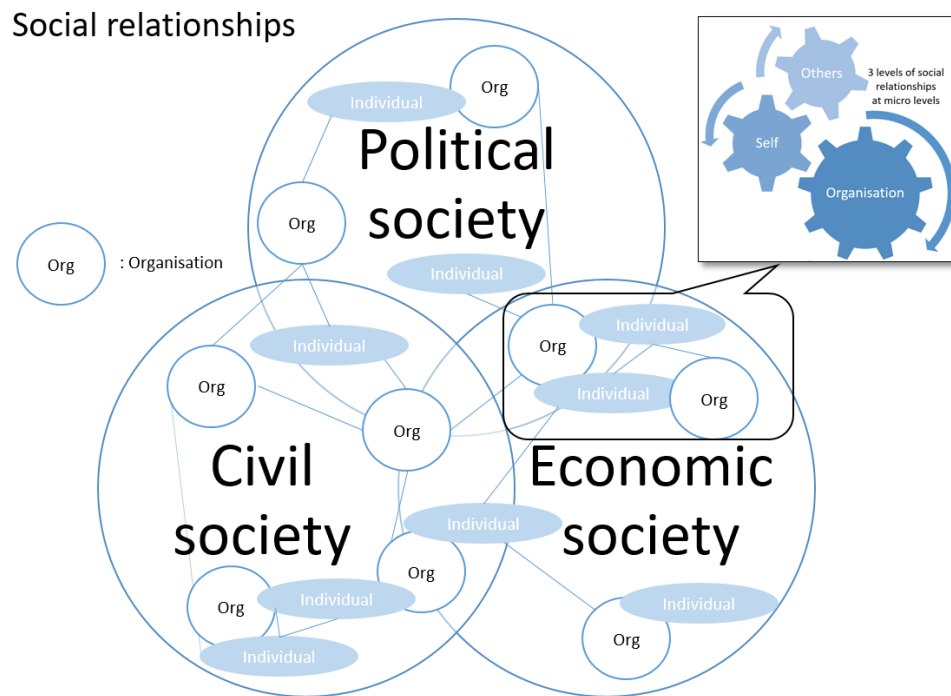
Power is considered as the basic human motivation, which drives individual or group behaviour (Foucault and Gordon 1980; Mintzberg 1983 cited in Clegg 1989; Wrong 1995). All humans seek the power to realise their goals and achieve what they want (Wrong 1995) or to serve their interests (Lukes 1986). In the lenses of NVC, power is used as strategies to fulfil human needs. The relationship among goals, interests, needs and strategies is mentioned in the literature of NVC and human needs. On top of that, because power exercises at the intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, (Foucault and Gordon 1980; Reeler 2007), the next part mentions about relationships and the impact of the relationship quality on the personal, organisational and social levels.

## **2.2. Relationships**

A relationship is a “particular type of connection between two or more entities or phenomena. A binding, usually continuous association between individuals wherein one, has some influence on feelings or actions of the other” (Pam 2013).

Actually, we live, learn and develop within three different levels of relationships: “relationship with self, interpersonal relationships with people we know and external relationships with the rest of the world, people we do not engage directly with, but who affect our lives and whose lives we may affect” (Reeler 2007: 18). The world includes different societies where people live in a specific region and

share the same political and unique cultural practices (Giddens 1997). Society includes subsets of individuals and organisations (Giddens 1997; The Barefoot Collective 2017) in three interacting spheres, namely civil society, political society and economic society (The Barefoot Collective 2015). Coming to the term ‘workplace’, it is a location where the organisation - a set of people combine to achieve some goal - operates (Russell 1975; The Barefoot Collective 2009) either in political, economic or civil society. Therefore, society is a living system including subsystems of individuals, organisations and the relationships among these subsystems (The Barefoot Collective 2011). Three levels of social relationships at the macro and micro are the network of relationships among individuals, organisations and society.



*Figure 2-2 - Three levels of social relationships*

*adopted from Giddens (1997), The Barefoot Collective (2009, 2015, 2017) – original graphic by author*



Relationships matter because they shape society (The Barefoot Collective 2011). For example, the atmosphere in the family or workplace is defined by the relationship among family members or colleagues (The Barefoot Collective 2011). It is the same as above, the relationships among non-government organisations, businesses and government organisations could strengthen or weaken some groups of people or organisations within that society. Therefore, relationships are at the heart of development work (Scott-Villiers 2004; Eyben 2006b; Eyben 2010). They are both means and ends to build a healthy and sustainable community (Eyben 2006b; The Barefoot Collective 2009). Change starts and ends with relationships (The Barefoot Collective 2011). Good relationships are crucial for understanding and addressing power relations (Leslie and Groves 2004; The Barefoot Collective 2011). Specialists in development work emphasise good relationships must be established among political, economics and civil society rather than limiting within the last sector (Leslie and Groves 2004; Scott-Villiers 2004; Eyben 2006b; Eyben 2006a; Eyben 2010). Therefore, creating and nurturing relationship within the organisation and among organisations are the fundamental purpose of any type of organisations (Scott-Villiers 2004; The Barefoot Collective 2009; Duck and McMahan 2016).

Relationships at the workplace directly connect to power relations because it links to the hierarchical structure. Moreover, Reeler (2007) states that power at each level may make people be free or unfree, and these kinds of “un-freedoms” at each level of relationships reinforce each other. Parallel, good relationships are vital to healthy individuals, organisations (Scott-Villiers 2004; Eyben 2006b; The Barefoot Collective 2009). Below are manifested components of the three-levelled relationships at the workplace and their impacts on the organisation:

Self-relationship in work, including personal beliefs, thoughts and values which shape a person's behaviour and interaction with others (Naagarazan 2006; Rokeach 2008; The Barefoot Collective 2009; Rosenberg 2015). This relationship impacts the individual's performance and the way that an individual interacts with others and the organisation. If one person could not enact his or her responsible well-being, he or she could not be aware of how his or her thoughts or behaviours impact others and take care of others (Scott-Villiers 2004). If a person is in fear or feels self-doubt or self-hatred, he or she will feel powerless and don't act to create the change that he or she wants (The Barefoot Collective 2009); his or her role performance is impossible (Clark and Robboy 1992). Even more, he or she may be oppressed by others and limited in some rights (Reeler 2007). As a consequence, the organisation is negatively impacted because personal well-being accumulates to the organisational development (Scott-Villiers 2004; Duck and McMahan 2016).

Relationship with other people includes colleagues, customers, partners, superiors, and subordinators. This interpersonal relationship is where power exercises most obviously. As stated in the literature about power at Part 2.1, every person has their own power property to resort in each relationship (French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009). However, they could choose to either dominate or empower others. Abusive relationships may impact self-esteem and cause political oppression. In contrast, good relationships unlock positive things and open surprising possibilities (The Barefoot Collective 2009). Good relationships make people more supportive and cooperative (Leslie and Groves 2004; The Barefoot Collective 2009; Duck and McMahan 2016).

Relationship with organisations includes legitimate power and implicit culture. These hegemonic factors may shape employees' beliefs or sometimes prevent them from taking place some original ideas which belong to innovation, freedom or

collaboration. For example, an obedience culture may be a hindrance to democracy, which finally impacts employees' confidence when they work with other partners.

Organisations matter because they pool the individual's strengths to achieve what an individual could not do alone (The Barefoot Collective 2009). Organisations enable people to mobilise the collective power to face human challenges and open possibilities (The Barefoot Collective 2009). However, the quality of relationships within the organisation could define the ability of employees to work together for achieving the organisational goals (Duck and McMahan 2016). Many studies show that great organisations are where these three dimensions of relationship balance (Beck and Cowan 2014; Laloux 2014). Even more, the hierarchical structure is replaced by the self-organisation and self-consciousness (Laloux 2014; Kopina 2019). In these organisations, leaders optimise their empowerment in terms of how they promote employees' and collective inner strengths through invoking 'Power-within', 'Power-to' and 'Power-with' (Collins 2001; Laloux 2014; Kopina 2019).

Good relationship is defined by trust, which is based on honesty, open and integrity (Leslie and Groves 2004; Eyben 2006a; The Barefoot Collective 2009; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015). Good relationships are also built on empathy and compassion (Goleman 1999; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015). Covey states that beside integrity, people need good intent, capability and result to build trust at the workplace (Covey and Merrill 2006). However, under the lenses of NVC, fundamentally NVC is about intention which makes people more ready to hear each other (Lasater and Stiles 2010).

Empathy is the ability to present with someone and sense the world from their perspective (Goleman 1999; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Brown 2013; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013; Rosenberg 2015). Empathy is accepting other's feelings and needs without any judgement (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015).

Empathy does not mean we accept someone's behaviour, but we accept their soul and humanity (Krzisnik 2013). In war, conflict or social movements, empathy is the key component that enables the transformation of the "enemy image" about the opponents (Kashtan 2015). Empathy does not only mean sharing the feelings; it also includes thinking about and caring about others' feelings (Zaki 2019b) and others' lives (Mosenzon 2014). As a consequence, empathy helps to increase our concern to others' well-being and promotes our kindness (Mosenzon 2014; Zaki 2019b). Empathy could happen at both the personal and collective level (Zaki 2019b). Empathy brings harmony into the workplace, enhances customer service and promotes organisational performance (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Mitchell 2013). Empathy also pushes personal and interpersonal productivity (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011). In 2012, Google found that its most successful teams were unusually people-oriented where the members tuned into one another feelings and supported each other (Zaki 2019b). Empathy could transform into compassion if it goes with the motivation of taking action to alleviate suffering (Neff 2011; Strauss *et al.* 2016). Rosenberg (2015) mentions to NVC as compassionate communication to emphasise the readiness to give from the heart.

Relationships are formed through communication (Leslie and Groves 2004), and NVC is to establish an honest and empathic relationship that will fulfil everyone's needs (Rosenberg 2015). People also use NVC to build effective relationships at work and political arena (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015)

NVC does not only focus on the interpersonal relationship; it also emphasises the intrapersonal relationship (Rosenberg 2015). In the next part, we could see how NVC can build healthy relationships for all and how NVC could transform power expression in these relationships.

### **2.3. Nonviolent communication (NVC)**

Nonviolence does not merely mean the absence of violence or self-suffering (Leory 1974). Nonviolence includes love, truth and courage (Kashtan 2015). Love to see and accept the humanity in any hurting behaviour (Kashtan 2015). The courage to live with the truth, to endure the possible danger and to fight for the truth (Kashtan 2015). Nonviolence fights against injustice, not the people (Leory 1974). Nonviolence moves forward to the cooperation, construction, openness and human bonds (Leory 1974; The Barefoot Collective 2015). A nonviolent personality could break the cycle of violence (Bhalerao and Kumar 2015). The non-violent approach is respectful of the people on ‘the other side’ and can be more powerful than weapons (The Barefoot Collective 2015)

According to DiSanza & Legge (2005), communication is the process of exchange of messages between two people directly or through a technology medium (cited in Bhalerao and Kumar 2015; Duck and McMahan 2016). The message, either verbal or nonverbal, is encoded by the speaker’s view and then decoded by the receiver’s view (Agarwal 2010; Duck and McMahan 2016). Both speaker and receiver’s views are impacted by their beliefs, which reflect their attitude toward events in their life (Hathaway 1998). When an event happens, people evaluate or interpret according to their belief.

Communication takes account of seventy five percent (75%) of human life and has close links to human well-being (Agarwal 2010). People need communication to have their needs fulfilled, to get work done and to have problems solved (Agarwal 2010). Communication is the principal mechanism to build relationships (Duck 2007; Kenedy 2009; Bhalerao and Kumar 2015), to manage conflicts (Demo 1986), to measure job satisfaction (Ibrahim *et al.* 2013; Vermeir *et al.* 2018), and to design organisational performance (Mitchell 2013).

### **2.3.1. Assumptions about NVC**

Nonviolent Communication is a compassionate dialogue in which people could move beyond differences in opinions, judgements, and evaluations to touch the feelings and the core needs of the relevant parties (Rosenberg 2015; Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017). NVC enables the connection from one to oneself and to others in an empathic manner (Krzisnik 2013); NVC is based on the following assumptions:

- (1) All human share the same needs, although the strategies we use to meet our needs are different (Kashtan and Kashtan n.d ; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015). Conflicts happen at the level of strategies rather than the level of needs because of strategies couple with interpretation (Kashtan and Kashtan n.d).
- (2) All the judgements, evaluations, complaints, or anger reflect the met or unmet needs of the owner
- (3) Feelings point to needs being met or unmet (Kashtan and Kashtan ; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015). Positive feelings and negative ones go with met and unmet needs, respectively (Kashtan and Kashtan n.d; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015). The assessment, either the needs met or unmet involving interpretations or beliefs (Kashtan and Kashtan n.d).
- (4) All the actions are to meet the needs consciously or unconsciously (Kashtan and Kashtan n.d; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015). People only resort to violence when they do not recognise the existence of more effective strategies to meet their needs (Kashtan and Kashtan n.d).



*Figure 2-3 - Three communication zones*

*Source: Compassion Course Online – Bond (2018)*

### **2.3.2. Components of NVC**

Four components of nonviolent communication are observations, feelings, needs, and requests (Rosenberg 2015), in which:

Observation describes something as factual, which happens when people notice something with a non-judgmental way (Rosenberg 2015; Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017). NVC differentiates between observation and judgment. The person gets judged at the moment he or she adds the evaluation into the observation (Rosenberg 2015; Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017). Evaluation goes with naming and judging (Rosenberg 2015). It makes people self-defensive fostering misunderstanding, frustration, and violence” (Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017: 278). Judgemental communication “in terms of ‘right and wrong,’ ‘true or false’ often blocks free and open relationship (Rosenberg 2015; Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017).

Feelings are the mental experiences of body states, which arise as the brain interprets emotions, themselves physical states arising from the body's responses to external stimuli (Damasio 1999). The feelings are the antenna helping people to define their deeper met or unmet needs (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011). Comfortable feelings and uncomfortable ones inform us of one or many met and unmet needs, respectively (Rosenberg 2015). In nonviolent communication, feelings are different from thoughts (Rosenberg 2015; Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017). People often express what they think is happening to replace what they are feeling (Rosenberg 2015; Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017). The lesser emotions are adequately addressed, and more protracted distress remains because if a person could identify his or her needs, he or she could acknowledge what needs to be fulfilled and how to achieve them (Rosenberg 2015; Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017). For example, when an employee says “I feel angry and sad because my boss rejected my proposal”, under these feelings are the unmet needs for efficiency, connection and acceptance.

Needs are the core motivations of human behaviour. Marshall expresses that inner needs are basic and common to all (Rosenberg 2015). Needs are different from strategies (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Bowers and Moffett 2012; Rosenberg 2015). “Needs contain no reference to anybody taking any particular action” (Rosenberg 2015: loc 2976). “Strategies refer to specific actions that specific people may take” (Rosenberg 2015: loc 2977). There are multiple strategies to fulfil one’s needs (Kashtan and Kashtan n.d ; Max-Neef 1992; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Bowers and Moffett 2012; Rosenberg 2015). Furthermore, “fundamental human needs must be understood as a system, the dynamics of which does not obey hierarchical linearity. This means that, on the one hand, no need is per se more important than any other; and, on the other hand, that there is no fixed order of precedence in the actualization of needs” (Max-Neef et al. 1989: 44). Max-Neef



expresses that needs can be satisfied in different ways at different levels or contexts within societies: (1) with regard to oneself; (2) with regard to the social group; (3) and with regard to the environment (Max-Neef 1992)

Requests are specific suggestions or invitations (Rosenberg 2015). Marshall suggests the differentiation between Request and Demand (Rosenberg 2015). The request is doable and opens the opportunity for the other to say no (Rosenberg 2015). Demand is violent because it is intimidating and forceful (Rosenberg 2015). Demand is a form of ‘power-over’ which does not lead to a healthy and equal relationship (Rosenberg 2015; Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017).

### **2.3.3. Basic Human Needs**

Not only Rosenberg, but other authors also propose the basic human needs which are universally shared by human beings. The need-based approach enables people to restrain from judgemental and diagnostic language (Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017).

For different political, economic or social critic purposes, needs could be defined differently. They could be denoted as goals, strategies, or drives (Doyal and Gough 1991). As stated in the Oxford dictionary (2018), a need refers to what is required in order to do something or achieve some state of being. This definition reflects needs as strategies. NVC sees needs as ultimate goals, “fundamentally; needs are the resources life requires to sustain itself” (Rosenberg 2015: loc 2968).

Prominent pioneers in human needs theories are Abraham Maslow, W. I. Thomas and Erick Fromm (Maslow 1943; Sites 1973). Abraham Maslow (1943) proposes his hierarchy of five needs, which is leveraged into eights by Sites (1973) and nine by Burton (Burton and Sandole 1986; cited in Bowers and Moffett 2012). Both

Rosenberg and Manfred Max-Neef identifies approximately forty needs grouped into seven and nine categories, respectively (Max-Neef 1992; Bowers and Moffett 2012). Some authors stress the interdependence among needs in term of need fulfilment, and verse visa (Doyal and Gough 1991; Max-Neef 1992).

Above authors emphasise the correlation between need fulfilment and human well-being at both individual and social levels. Doyal and Gough (1991) claim universal human needs are what individuals must somehow achieve to optimise their life chances. In contrast, the continuous failure to satisfy needs results in progressive human malfunctions, or unfolded humaneness (Maslow 1943; Ekins and Max-Neef 1992; Kamenetzky 1992). At the individual level, it is proved that the repression of needs promotes aggressive competition (Kamenetzky 1992), harm and instigating violent behaviour (Kamenetzky 1992; Rosenberg 2003; Chapman 2012; Krzysnik 2013). At the social level, the lack of satisfaction of the need for emotional and physical communication may increase strong drives for power, violence, domination, consumption and possession which may cause many social problems in both developed and developing societies (Kamenetzky 1992; Krzysnik 2013). “There could not be social stability, regardless of the availability of authorities’ ‘coercive power’, unless certain individual requirements were met” (Burton and Sandole 1986: 337). Economists such as Kamenetzky, and Max-Neef measure a national economic efficacy through the satisfaction of human needs (Max-Neef *et al.* 1989; Max-Neef *et al.* 1991; Ekins and Max-Neef 1992; Max-Neef 1992). Doyal and Gough debate that human competency and productivity are progressed if they could fulfil their needs (Ekins and Max-Neef 1992). Max-Neef states that the inadequate satisfaction of any fundamental need reveals human poverty and pathology (Max-Neef 1992).

Nevertheless, if it is a goal or a strategy, intermediate or long term; needs are the most potent source of human motivation (Maslow 1943; Doyal and Gough 1991; Ekins and Max-Neef 1992). Under the lenses of NVC, Rosenberg argues that all human communication or behaviours are to satisfy at least one underlying need (Kashtan and Kashtan n.d; Rosenberg 2003; Bowers and Moffett 2012). Besides needs, Interests and values (Schwartz 1992; Swedberg 2005a; Swedberg 2005b; Rokeach 2008) are also seen as the driving force of human behaviours. Interests are advantages or benefits of a person or a group (Oxford, n.d). “Values are the scales we use to weight our choices for our actions, whether to move forward or away from something” (Naagarazan 2006: 3). Values serve as standards to guide us in the different social positions and issues (Schwartz 1992; Rokeach 2008).

There are some correlations between interests and values with needs. Feinberg (1986) states that there are two categories of interests including more ultimate goals and welfare interests; the later are conditions or means to achieve the former (cited in Luke 1986). In the correlation with NVC, welfare interests are similar to strategies or intermediate needs to achieve the ultimate goals. Ultimate goals may be equivalent to needs or “the most powerful interests are basic human needs” (Fisher *et al.* 2011: 48). About the needs, Rokeach (2008) also separates two types of individual values, including terminal and instrumental values. Instrumental values refer to the beliefs about the mode of behaviours to attain the terminal values (Rokeach 2008). The terminal values refer to the ultimate goals or end-states of existence that are worth striving for (Schwartz 1992; Rokeach 2008). Comparing between terminal values and needs in NVC, terminal values is equivalent to fundamental needs.

<b>Max-Neef (axiological needs)</b>	<b>Rosenberg</b>	<b>Rokeach (terminal values)</b>
Subsistence	Physical nurturance	Comfortable life
Protection		Family security/ National security
Affection	Celebration/ Interdependence	Equality/ True friendship/ Mature love
Understanding		Social recognition
Participation		Contribution
Idleness	Play/ Spiritual Communion	Harmony/ Happiness/ Exciting life/ Pleasure
Creation		Beauty
Identity	Integrity/ Spiritual Communion	Self-respect/ Wisdom/ Salvation
Freedom	Autonomy	Freedom/ Peace

*Table 2-1 – Rokeach (2008) terminals values and basic needs as Rosenberg (2015) and Max-Neef (1992)*

However, there are some critical differences among interests, values and needs relating to the power dynamics.

People are interested in power to achieve the outcomes which serve the interests of power (Lukes 1986) or the special groups to which they belong (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992; Martin 1992). Citing from different sociologists, Swedberg (2005a) claims that interests located in the centre of social conflicts. Personal interests, group interests separate people and group from one another (Swedberg 2005b). Interests, therefore, might be dangerous in economics and politics as everybody acts on their own interest (Martin 1992; Swedberg 2005b; Fukuyama 2015).

Not taking action for advantages, values reflect emotional beliefs or paradigm about what is acceptable (Schwartz 1992; Naagarazan 2006; Rokeach 2008). Value systems are the worldview which could be learnt or conditioned by society (Schwartz 1992; Naagarazan 2006; Rokeach 2008; Rosenberg 2015). It could be archetypes, ideologies, stereotypes, social norms which human being has been internalised during their development history (Schwartz 1992; Naagarazan 2006; Rokeach 2008; Rosenberg 2015). Although some values are universal or similar in content or structure (Schwartz 1992; Schwartz 1994), it would still be possible to account for the diversity of individual behaviours, ideologies, norms, attitudes, judgements and evaluations (Rokeach 2008; Schwartz 2012). Therefore, values have affective and cognitive aspects (Rokeach 2008). On the one hand, people are proud of our values; on the other hand, people are inescapable from their hegemony (Rosenberg 2015). Consequently, there have been many “good wars” in which people co-opted by the siren song of violence to fight for the heroic stereotypes, patriots or to fight against the wrongdoings (Rosenberg 2015). Through the lenses of NVC, it is dangerous to confuse value judgements and moralistic ones. “Value judgments reflect our beliefs on how life can best be served. We make moralistic judgments of people and behaviours that fail to support our value judgments; for example, “Violence is bad. People who kill others are evil” (Rosenberg 2015: loc 565).

In the history of nonviolent fighting, the peaceful protestor Mahatma Gandhi was well-known for his promotion of the Ahimsa model (Fischer 1982; Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015). Ahimsa is an ancient model for nonviolent living whose three axioms, including “Do no harm”, “Tell the truth”, and “build the selfless awareness” (Fischer 1982; Rosenberg 2015). However, selfless awareness seems impractical in the modern world for ordinary people (Deepak n.d). Therefore, in his lifelong mediator work, Rosenberg’s legacy could be the new value system of

NVC, which both preserves and updates the Ahimsa model (Deepak n.d). NVC acknowledges the universal needs which connect human beings instead of the state of selfless.

Fundamental needs are universal (Burton and Sandole 1986; Avruch and Black 1987; Doyal and Gough 1991; Max-Neef 1992; Rokeach 2008). Rosenberg states that all human beings have the same needs regardless of background, gender, upbringing, or culture (Rosenberg 2003; Bowers and Moffett 2012). Needs do not depend on the social values, nor are they conditioned by the natural conditions or the will of the conscious mind (Ekins and Max-Neef 1992). Carlos A. Mallmann (1973) also emphasizes “needs are those requirements that are always found when the behaviour of human beings is analysed irrespective of culture, race, language, creed, colour, sex or age” (cited in Ekins and Max-Neef 1992: 182). To differentiate among needs, interests and values, Burton and Sandole (1986: 337) state that “while interests are negotiable, values are less so, and ontological needs not at all”.

The human needs theories create a paradigm shift in the assumptions and understanding of human behaviour (Burton and Sandole 1986; Bowers and Moffett 2012). While the interest-based paradigm sees the human species as aggressive, flawed, and needing to be controlled (Burton and Sandole 1986; Swedberg 2005b; Bowers and Moffett 2012), the value-based paradigm links to moral judgements. In contrast, the need-based paradigm sees humans motivated by a common set of needs (Burton and Sandole 1986; Bowers and Moffett 2012) and this paradigm shift allows different power relationships among human beings which transforms from coercion, ‘power-over’ to collaboration, ‘power-with’; or from the zero-sum game where interest is focused to win-win where needs are focused (Burton and Sandole 1986; Rubenstein 2001; Bowers and Moffett 2012). This paradigm shift operates

in the three-processed dialogue in NVC, which includes self-empathy, empathy and honest expression.

#### 2.3.4. Processes of NVC

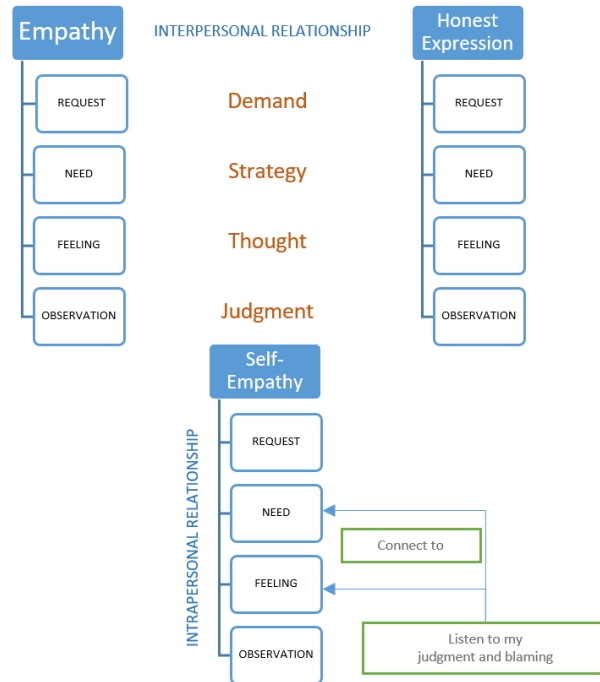


Figure 2-4 - Three processes in NVC dialogue

*adopted from Rosenberg (2015) – original graphic by author*

Self-empathy: a person observes his or her judgements and blames on himself, herself or the situation. Instead of being stuck in the negative self-blaming, he or she connects to the feelings or needs (Rosenberg 2015). In this intrapersonal relationship, people could cultivate self-compassion by consciously choosing actions which serve their needs and values out of extrinsic rewards, sense of guilt, shame, duty or punishment (Rosenberg 2015). Moreover, when people make a mistake, rather than self-blaming, people could mourn for their unmet needs,

forgive themselves and reflect where they can grow by moving forward to the desire for contribution to their own and other's well-being (Rosenberg 2015). In other words, NVC could liberate ourselves from cultural conditions and resolve our internal conflicts (Rosenberg 2015). In this process, people move from the sense of powerless to possibilities and they could empower themselves or build 'power-within' for better actions.

Empathy: connects to other feelings and needs. People could hear feelings and needs expressed, even when the others are silent (Rosenberg 2015). When we hear someone with full empathic presence, their irreducible humanity shines forth (Kashtan 2015). Empathic listening allows one to put himself or herself into others' shoes to understand, to experience what the others are experiencing (The Barefoot Collective 2009; Scharmer and Kaufer 2013). Empathic listening could defuse potential violence by refraining people from blaming and judging (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015). Empathic listening allows people to open their heart, create connections and care for the well-being of each other (Kashtan 2015). Empathic listening could empower others by connecting to their needs so that they can see other available choices to satisfy their needs, enhance their productivity ('power-to'), or figuring out possibilities to fulfil needs for all ('power-with') (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011). Empathic listening also enables people to hear "No" without taking it as the rejection (Rosenberg 2015).

Honest expression: a person expresses his or her empathy to the others. At the same time, he or she reveals his or her feelings and needs through what is observed. Expressing vulnerability is enable to solve the conflicts (Rosenberg 2015). In conflict resolution, identifying common needs could unite the parties and set the background to develop strategies that meet everyone's needs (Bower and Moffett 2012). NVC is not to change others or their behaviours; it aims to build an honest



and empathic relationship in which every party could fulfil their needs (Rosenberg 2015). Because compassion includes empathy and motivation of taking action to alleviate suffering (Neff 2011; Strauss *et al.* 2016), the honest expression is a form of self-compassion and compassion (Neff 2011). If the honest expression is used to empower someone, it is 'power-to'. If the honest expression is used in the effort to create a collective result, it is 'power-with'. Honest expression help both parties focus on their needs so that they can boost interpersonal productivity (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011)

By shining the light to the fundamental human needs, NVC enhances the interpersonal relationship in three aspects: promotes the connection between people and people; provides possibilities for conflict resolutions and promotes altruistic motivations for further contribution toward other parties (Bower and Moffett 2012).

Seventy five percent of NVC intervention programs evaluated improved the social behaviours of the individuals and groups in term of enhancing the ability of verbal communication; empathically dealing with stress and conflict, and bringing more sensitivity to one's and other's needs and experience (Visakavičiūtė and Bandzevičienė 2019). NVC helps to "resolve conflicts peacefully, whether personal or public, domestic or international" (Rosenberg 2003: 2). NVC transforms the 'power-over' to 'power-with' (Kashtan 2002). NVC can help to address conflicts on the spot and enhance connections in the community (Kashtan 1999; Nosek and Durán 2017). It also de-escalates conflicts and helps social activists rejuvenate in doing their activism (Kashtan 2012). NVC increases self-compassion (Suarez *et al.* 2014); empathy in youth and adults (Nosek and Durán 2017; Alshughry 2018). NVC encourages trust in personal relationships characterised by openness in coaching and mentoring (Cox and Dannahy 2005). For parolees, NVC may be effective in decreasing recidivism rates (Suarez *et al.* 2014); addressing

problematic coping and communication styles resulting from incarceration and criminal behaviour, building and sustaining positive social support networks (Marlow *et al.* 2011). In family situations, NVC improves the couple's communication and marital satisfaction (Vazhappilly and Reyes 2017). NVC increases positive affect and decreases negative affect on the mental health of intimacy partners in conflict situations (Young 2011). At work, NVC improves anger management (Sitzman 2004; Suarez *et al.* 2014), prevents emotional distress and social stressors (Wacker and Dziobek 2018). NVC could transform a problem-focused approach into creative problem-solving approach (Sitzman 2004). It also improves inter-professional collaboration in the workplace (Museux *et al.* 2016)

### **2.3.5. Summary**

In conclusion, NVC provides an alternative view of human nature (Bowers and Moffett 2012). It enables people to accept the full humanity of every person, regardless of how unhappy we are with their actions (Kashtan 2015). NVC recognises human dignity in all so it could facilitate the retrieval of the ethic of authenticity (Nosek 2012). By focusing on the universal human basic needs, there is no separation between “us” and “them”, no label, no blame or violence in NVC (Krzisnik 2013). Therefore, NVC could transform from disconnecting communication to connecting communication (Krzisnik 2013). At any level of relationships, NVC could transform ‘power-over’ to ‘power-within’, ‘power-to’ and ‘power-with’.

## 2.4. Conclusion

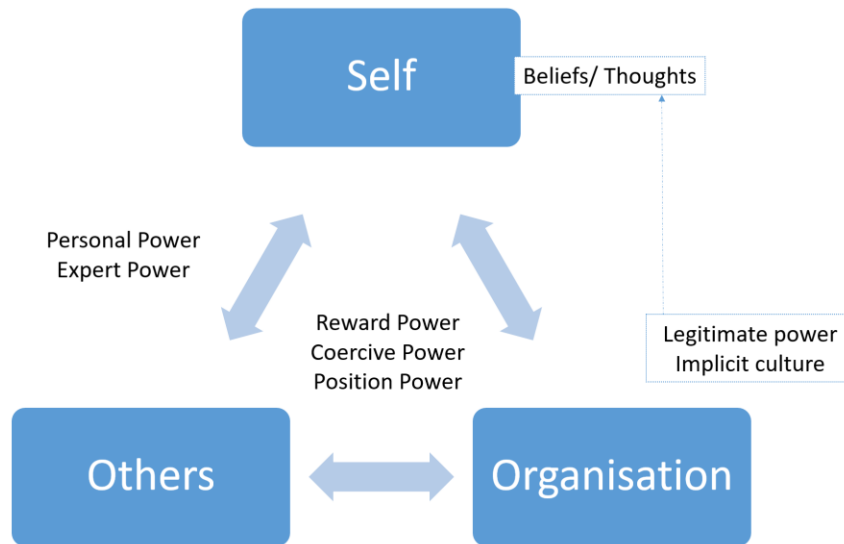


Figure 2-5 - Three levels relationship at the workplace in the correlation with power resources  
 adopted from Blau (1985), Clegg (1989), Wrong (1995), Gaventa (2006), Reeler (2007), and The  
 Barefoot Collective (2009) - original graphic by author

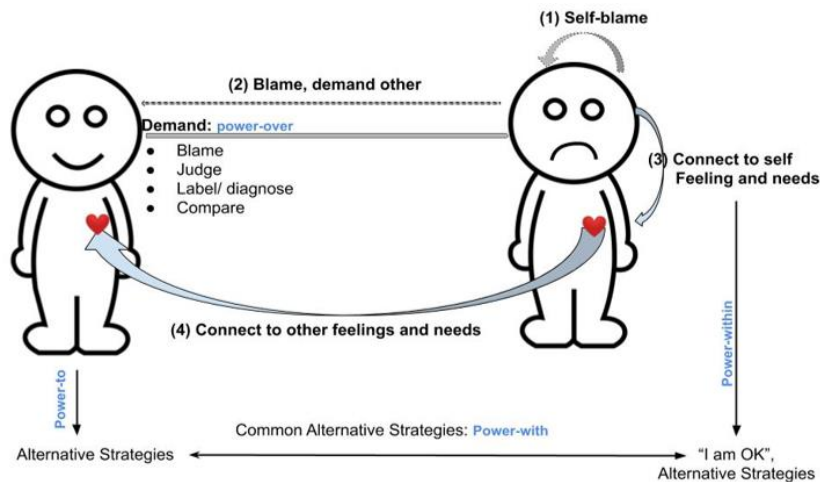


Figure 2-6 - How NVC can transform power expression  
 adapted from (Gaventa 2006; Rosenberg 2015) – original graphic by author

Figure 2-5 synthesises the three levels of relationship at the workplace in the correlation with power resources (French and Raven 1959 cited in The Barefoot Collective 2009; Reeler 2007). If people could use their power resources for the empowerment purpose, they could harvest a good relationship (Rowlands 1997; Chambers 2006; Gaventa 2006; The Barefoot Collective 2009). Good relationships which promote support and collaboration (Leslie and Groves 2004; The Barefoot Collective, 2009; Duck and McMahan 2016) could be built by honest and empathic communication (Leslie and Groves 2004; Eyben 2006a; The Barefoot Collective 2009; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015).

Figure 2-6 describes the processes of NVC in which people empathise with themselves and others before they express honestly. By accepting the mutual needs, one can stop ‘power-over’ (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015), find his/her own strategies (‘power-within’) (Rowlands 1997; Gaventa 2006; Rosenberg 2015), support others to figure out alternatives to fulfil their needs, give them freedom for decision-making even if their choice does not meet his/her expectation (‘power-to’) (Rowlands 1997; Chambers 2006; Gaventa 2006; Rosenberg 2015), and take actions together to fulfil needs for all (‘power-with’) (Rowlands 1997; Chambers 2006; Gaventa 2006; Rosenberg 2015)

The next chapter presents the methodologies which are used to collect data. Together with the advantages and disadvantages of the methods, it reflects the data collections in reality.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The overarching aim of this study is to investigate the effects of NVC on changing the expressions of power in workplace relationships. The target participants are people who took part in NVC workshops and have been applying NVC in their workplace interactions.

### **3.2. Research approach**

To understand the connection between the relationship with Self, the relationship with others, and the relationship with the organisations, the research applies the interpretive approach within the phenomenological tradition. Both the approach and tradition provide the empathic understanding of human actions (Bryman 2012). They assert that human actions align with social reality, which is meaningful for them (May 2011; Bryman 2012). This approach and tradition enabled me to “gain access to people’s ‘common-sense thinking’ and hence to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view” (Bryman 2012, p.30). When I explored the relationships of participants, and in what context power could or could not be transformed, I could study “how people interpret the world around them and their inner world of experiences, rather than the world ‘out there’” (May 2011, p.13).

Qualitative research is chosen because of the two reasons: the small size of the NVC practitioner community in Viet Nam which leads to the limitations in the number of participants; and it is an empathetic approach which allows me to grip with the richness and vibrancy of life (Mason 2017, p.ix).

The research methods include a semi-structured interview, focus group discussion and questionnaire, which help to optimise the amount of data collected (Creswell and Poth 2018).

### **3.3. The sampling strategy**

Because of the limited number of known practitioners and the in-depth content of the study, I chose the purposive sampling within a non-probability approach. This choice allows me to generalise findings to the sample rather than to the population (Bryman 2012; Creswell and Poth 2018). In more details, a combination of criterion sampling and convenience sampling enables me to screen all target participants and maximize the opportunities for data collection (Bryman *et al.* 2004; Dörnyei 2007). In particular, participants were recruited from an online community which was established from an NVC workshop. All of them are using NVC in their work relationships. In order to optimise data collection, the participants were allowed to choose to join the individual interview, or join the group discussion, or fill the questionnaire according to their convenience and readiness to share with the group.

### **3.4. Data collection**

Data collection tools include five personal semi-structured interviews, one focus group discussion consisting of five people, and ten self-completed questionnaires that were submitted through email.

The interview allows me to understand what makes sense for the individual in their social world and act within it (Bryman 2012). In contrast to the indirect survey, the interviewer could clarify the questions and judge the extent to which the interviewees engage with the questions (Robson 2011). The interviewees could be inspired to respond to sensitive questions because of the presence of the interviewer

(Lee 1993; Robson 2011). The semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to standardize some part of data and record qualitative information about the topic (Laws 2002; May 2011). Open-ended questions give the interviewees space to answer within their own frame of reference (Laws 2002; May 2011). These answers may provide the interviewers with the social information which may be beyond his or her knowledge (Laws 2002; May 2011). These advantages are meaningful for my research because the participants gave me the insights which I did not find in other literature reviews. Moreover, the in-depth one-on-one interview could make data more valid, especially with the sensitive topics (Lee 1993) like personal thoughts, beliefs, relationship with the boss, power at work, or attitudes toward the organisation.

The focus group discussion included five people who still meet each other every two or four weeks for NVC peer sharing. The current bonding among group members created a safe environment for people to talk about some sensitive topics (Laws 2002). Additionally, other people feel motivated to share with what they resonate (Laws, 2002). For example, after one participant initiated, some other interviewees felt easier to share how uncomfortable it is for them to express their request to the person with whom has more power resources than they do. People in the group discussion could learn from others' experiences (Laws 2002) and reflect if they apply NVC correctly.

Because of the in-depth content of the survey, self-completion questionnaires allow participants to reply in their own pace and reduce the respondent fatigue (Bryman 2012). On top of that, the questionnaire combines Likert-scaled questions and open questions to help measure the impact of NVC and to get the participants' insights at the same time (Bryman *et al.* 2004).

### **3.5. Ethical concerns**

I took all the necessary precautions to protect the rights and benefits for participants according to the Maynooth University guidelines.

Confidentially, all participants were well informed of the anonymity of data presentation (May 2011). My commitment to confidentiality included information about how data is saved in protected folders in the researcher's computer until the research is submitted. In addition, the interviewees were made aware of possibly leaking risks of sensitive data. Therefore, interviewees' names were not collected, and their responses were coded by a sequence. Data was only accessed by the researcher. The focus group was also informed about confidentiality prior to the discussion that their sharing would not be distributed without their consent. The participants were advised that they hold the right to withdraw from the research even after their response (May 2011) and before the research is submitted.

Because of the sensitive topic (Lee 1993), the in-depth interview about the sense of self and other relationships might hurt the interviewees unintentionally if it is triggered by sensitive issues. I advised the participants to be aware of the information they brought to the interview, and that they could skip any questions that made them feel uncomfortable, or that they could stop the interview at any point. The participants were also advised in advance that they could choose any places where they feel comfortable and free most as long as it works best for them.

Finally, the ethical guidelines and self-reflection helped me limit my bias (May 2011) toward the impact of NVC during the interview. For example, I observed a comfortable feeling emerging within me when the interviewees responded positively.



### **3.6. Limitations**

Because of the characteristics of the interpretive approach, quality research is small-scale (Bryman 2012). On top of that, people who find that NVC is not useful may not volunteer for the study so their views may not be included in this survey. Therefore, the findings could not be generalised to conclude if the nonviolent communication can address the power in the workplace relationships.

In-depth and long questionnaires might cause respondent fatigue (Bryman 2012) and risk of withdrawal. The participants were informed about the length and in-depth nature of the questionnaires and instructions on how to reply to them effectively, and they were offered alternatives which included changing to group discussion or having a personal interview or withdrawing from the study. I compared between the interviews and focus group and noted that the questionnaire did not give much further understanding (Laws 2002; May 2011). For example, one person responded that “NVC is less effective to very practical people”, and I did not have the opportunity to clarify what “very practical” means for him or her. Another disadvantage of the survey is the memory loss which limits the participants from recalling some events (Hoinville and Jowell 1978; Robson 2011).

Because of the time limit, the group discussion sometimes could not include all of the individual stories (Laws 2002). During the discussion, participants were encouraged to add in their experience into the stories which they resonated at that time.

Because of financial limitations, the focus group discussion and personal interviews took place through video calls. Being aware of the possible technical issues (May 2011), I informed the participants in advance about choosing a quiet place with a stable internet connection. Before the interviews, the interviewees were also

notified about the risk of short-time connection so that they would not be disappointed.

One of the limitations comes from the improper practices which reduce the effectiveness of NVC in their application. Through the group discussion, I found some practitioners still do not differentiate between needs and strategies.

Finally, I am aware of some limitations of this study which may be improved by other studies. In particular, my firm belief in NVC may have caused some bias in the interviews and the focus group discussion; i.e. causing me to focus more on some questions than others (Smith 1991; Robson 2011). I realise any subconscious bias also may limit my consideration of other opposite theories. On top of that, the thesis also could not isolate NVC from other practices in order to make the data more objective.

### **3.7. Data analysis**

The data analysis is based on a grounded theory approach. At the initial phase of coding, the data were categorised into three main groups which are in line with three levels of relationships in the literature review (Bryman 2012; Creswell and Poth 2018). Sub-categories gather data into different aspects of each leading group. In the self-completed questionnaires, I compared the answers between the Likert to the story telling approach to figure out the consistency of data and skip the unmatched responses. In the focused coding phase (Bryman 2012), data is re-arranged in the appropriate category. Based on the emerging themes from the shared stories, I grouped them into different groups of power expression and created some open labels which provide interpretation in light of the literature review (Bryman 2012; Creswell and Poth 2018).

Appendix 1 describes categories and labels in which data was analysed.

### **3.8. Conclusion**

The survey applied the interpretative and phenomenological approach, using qualitative methods and a purposive, nonprobability sampling strategy. This chapter has summarised the processes of designing and delivering data output in the light of grounded theory to work towards insightful findings and conclusions.

## Chapter 4

### Findings and Analysis

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents in what ways participants have shared how NVC helps them to address the expression of power in each level of relationship. The chapter also analyses the interaction among the relationships and record some new insights emerging from the findings.

##### 4.1.1. Demography of the participants

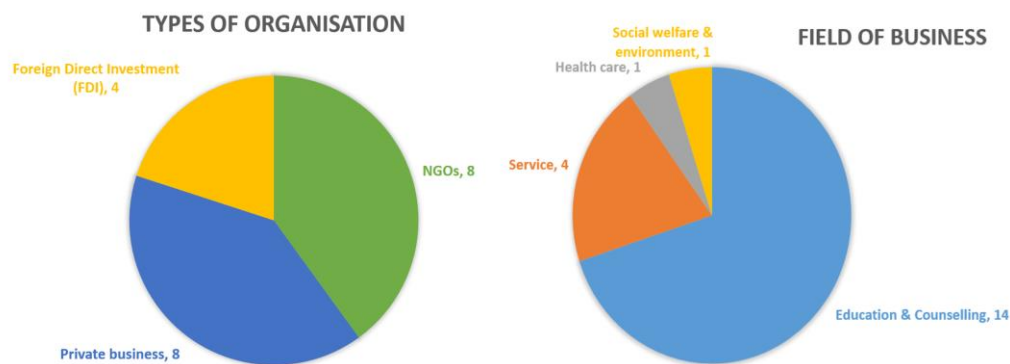
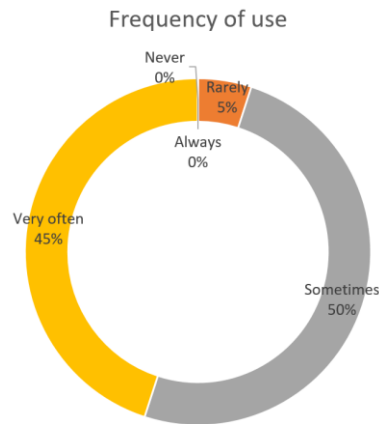


Figure 4-1 - Demography of the participants

Among twenty participants, eight come from NGOs; private business accounts for the same figure, four are working in foreign direct investors (FDI). Fourteen out of twenty organisations belong to the education and counselling sectors.

Four participants are Chief Executive Officers of their organisations; the others have a maximum of ten superiors. Some participants reported that they interact with more than a hundred clients and beneficiaries. Exceptionally, one teacher reported having over four hundred students.

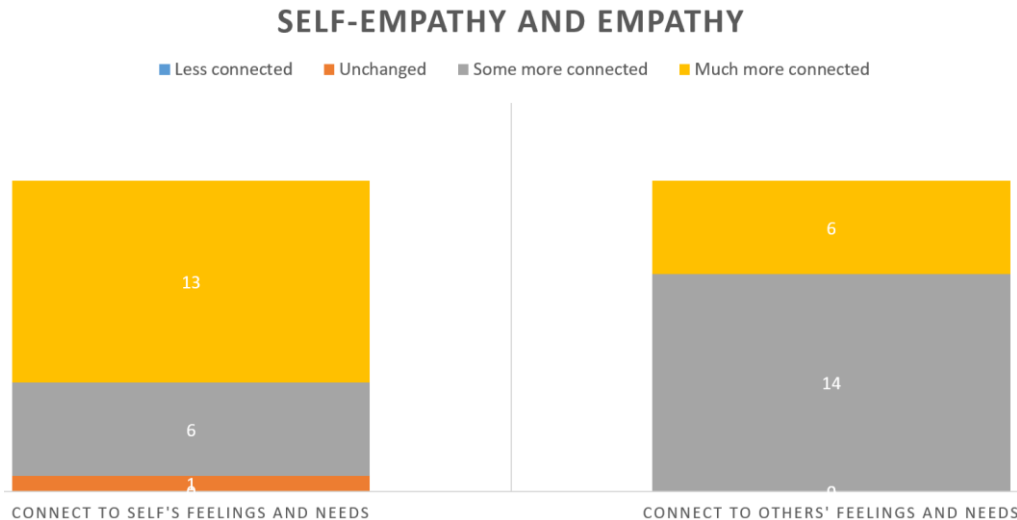
Five participants who took part in the personal interviews are coded from (Int1) to (Int5), five participants in the focus group discussion are coded from (Grp1) to (Grp5), and ten people taking the survey are coded from (Srv1) to (Srv10).



*Figure 4-2 - The frequency of applying NVC in work*

One person reports that he/she rarely uses NVC in work, and each half of the participants apply it sometimes and very often, respectively.

#### 4.1.2. Overview change in self-empathy and empathy

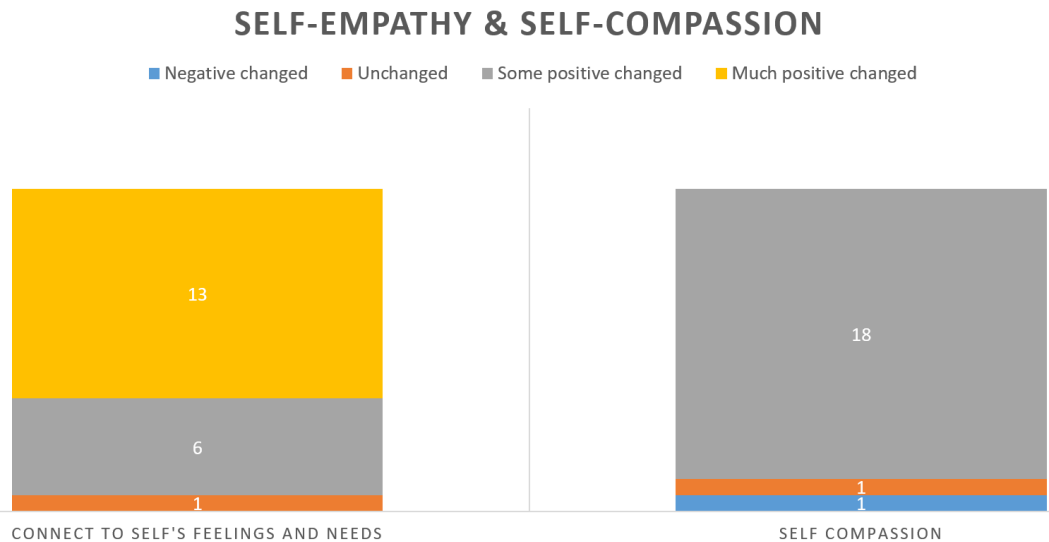


*Figure 4-3 - Self-empathy and empathy*

Except for one case, nineteen participants report increased levels of self-empathy, with two thirds reporting much more connection to self. Connection to others' feeling and needs is less strongly pronounced, with all participants reporting increased connection, but only one third reporting much more connected than before practicing NVC.

#### 4.2. The relationship with the Self

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the relationship with Self includes personal beliefs, thoughts and values which shape individual behaviours and interactions (Naagarazan 2006; Rokeach 2008; The Barefoot Collective 2009; Rosenberg 2015). The study aims to know if NVC could liberate people from their negative behaviours, build positive thoughts about themselves and take actions to fulfil their needs. The more positive feedback with these results, the more possibilities of NVC to build 'Power-within' for people (Gaventa 2006).



*Figure 4-4 - Self-empathy and Self-compassion*

Overall, there is a correlation between the increase of self-empathy and self-compassion. Eighteen out of twenty participants reported that they were more compassionate with themselves. The participant with unchanged self-empathy reported a lower self-compassion than before applying NVC. Among six people who have been experiencing some positive changes in their self-empathy, one person said that his/her self-compassion remained unchanged.

#### **4.2.1. Increase in self-empathy**

Nineteen participants said they were more aware of their blame and judgements toward themselves or the situation at the time it happened. Even though not all the participants indicated they practiced self-empathy as soon as the triggered event occurs, the time that they struggled with self-blaming and self-judging was shortened. They indicated that they connected more with their feelings and needs rather than being stuck with negative feelings (Rosenberg 2015).

*I manage to catch my self-blaming and self-judgement a lot. When I realize I do this, I just stop, catch a breath and listen to my emotions. Let them have free reign for a while, without resisting or passing more judgement. After a while, the need for self-blaming or self-judgement is no longer there (Grp2)*

*Before applying NVC, it took me even a week to overcome the negative feedbacks from my boss. I blamed myself for the mistakes, for the imperfection. Now, I can spend half an hour or an hour with negative feelings because I focus more on the need I want to achieve. In that way, I can get the lesson learnt earlier (Int1)*

Once connected to their feelings and needs, participants indicated, they developed new understanding about themselves. They said they could explain their actions; they claimed they know what's vital for them in the short term, and what makes them happy in the long run (Rosenberg 2015).

*I recognise and explain my pattern of reaction, change it patiently with self-empathy. The more I transform my reaction pattern, the more I understand myself. I feel calmer and more confident to confront new challenges (Grp3)*

*My colleague is a talent acquisition specialist. For months, she has endured chronic stress because she has to lay off much staff for cost cutting. I give her empathic listening, and she recognises that she is doing against her nature of people nurturing. As a consequence, she could not fulfil her duty (Clark and Robboy 1992), and it impacts her well-being. She reconsiders her and company's needs then propose another short-term and long-term talent plan (Int4).*

Not limited to self-empathy in term of accepting current judgements, blames, feelings and needs, participants provided stories about how they cultivated their self-compassion.



#### **4.2.2. Increase Self-compassion**

Participants self-evaluated the change of their self-compassion and shared the relevant stories in three aspects: accepting self, taking action toward needs and improving feelings about Self in work.

##### **4.2.2.1 Self-acceptance**

Except for two people who claimed to have their self-compassion unchanged or reduced to the state where they still blame and judge themselves, the other eighteen report being more tolerant with their imperfection, accepting themselves, and forgiving their mistakes. One person says *“I less judge myself because I think mistakes and imperfection belong to human beings”* (Srv5). Seventeen people said they chose to connect with the needs they want to achieve, in which four people mentioned that they celebrated their achievements and five reported reflecting on lesson learned for the future.

*I accepted myself with my advantages and disadvantages. When I felt self-blaming and self-judgment, I tried to compassionate myself by thinking about my reaction for future cases and accepted that was the experience I got (Srv7)*

*When I make a mistake, I analysed to figure out the needs that underlay my imperfection which enhanced self-awareness and reduced self-blame (Srv1)*

It is worth highlighting that one person shared *“I stop being harsh with myself and demanding myself to do what is against my willing and needs”* (Int5)

##### **4.2.2.2 Take action toward needs**

Although the participants were not asked officially about their actions toward their needs, their stories were shared in different parts of the survey or in the interview.

Participants expressed how NVC enhances their self-insight. It means participants increase their responsibility for their well-being (Scott-Villiers 2004)

*The most valuable change which NVC brings to me is the connection to needs. I know I yearn for connection and peace. Therefore, I feel free to reject all the projects in which the donor try to dominate their requests over us (Int2)*

*I consciously choose the jobs bringing me inspiration because I will complete them well. I explain to my boss about the choice, and she agrees with me (Srv4)*

*I used to feel bad about myself if I relax at work or deliver something less than perfect. But nowadays I deliberate to choose to do so (giving higher priority to other aspects of my life) (Grp2)*

*I am still in fear of facing criticisms and oppositions in work. However, I try to connect with my needs to figure out if my decisions make me happy? That is how I overcome many challenges in work (Srv8)*

#### **4.2.2.3 Positive change in the feelings of Self**

Seventeen of the participants reported they felt more positive about themselves in work. For example, common expressions were “more courage”, “more confidence”, “calmer”, “more capable”, and “more master in problem-solving”.

Notably, two shared that they felt more positive about their colleagues, their customers and working environment (Int5, Srv6)

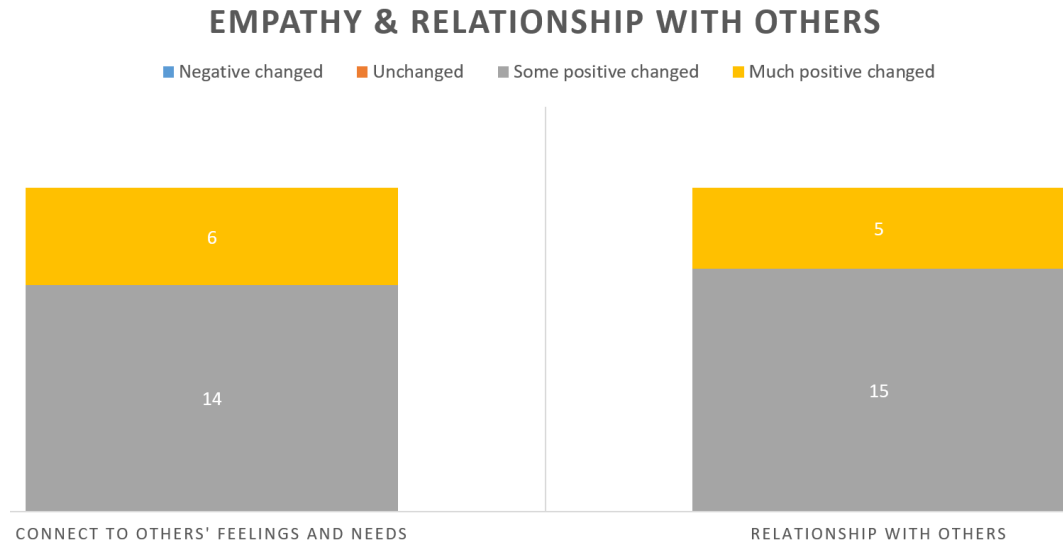
#### **4.2.3. Summary about the relationship with Self**

As presented in chapter two, people can free themselves by reclaiming their power from within (Gaventa 2006; Reeler 2007). ‘Power-within’ helps people to feel full abilities, capable and have right to take purposive actions (Rowlands 1997;

Chamber 2006). These personal transformations set the bedrock for healthy social change and organisational growth (Clark and Robboy 1992; Covey and Merrill 2006; Reeler 2007; Scott-Villiers and Oosterom 2016). The findings are compatible with the literature review in which NVC is able to build 'power-within' at work. 'Power-within' is the result of self-empathy and self-compassion. In particular, NVC enhances self-empathy, which allows most of participants to look through their judgements and connect to their feelings and needs (Rosenberg 2015). Moreover, they cultivated their self-compassion (Rosenberg 2015) which includes self-acceptance, self-forgiveness, and action taking to alleviate the suffering or fulfil their needs (Neff 2011; Strauss *et al.* 2016). In other word, NVC sheds light into participants' unconsciousness, liberates them from the inner struggles (Rosenberg 2015), and enables their responsible well-being (Scott-Villiers 2004). 'Power-within' is about hopefulness and positive feelings about Self. Positive beliefs emerge within which frees participants from their former negative thoughts.

Besides positive results from a relationship with Self, the findings also demonstrate many positive impacts of NVC on the relationship with Others.

### 4.3. The Relationship with Others



*Figure 4-5 - Empathy and relationship with others*

Figure 4-5 shows the consistent correlation between empathy improvement and relationship enhancement. Seventeen claimed their empathy and relationship with others increased in the same Likert scale. Two reported that their empathy increased while their relationship with others were better somehow than before using NVC. One case said that he/she was somewhat more connected to others' feelings, but that his/her quality of the relationship had much increased.

#### 4.3.1. Enhance communication

All participants reported a positive change in communication behaviours. In general, people stated that they become more patient, objective and connected to the needs of themselves and others. They were calmer in conflicts. They had more courage to express honestly. Through their stories, these characteristics are shown

in three groups: (1) Empathic listening, (2) Build dialogues for clarification and understanding, and (3) Clear and honest expression.

Seventeen participants claimed they apply more empathic listening, which helped them stop judgmental communication, reduced confrontation, saw the beauty in others and inspired others to solve their problem ('power-to').

*I almost stop diagnosing and giving advice. I focus more on empathic listening, be present with the speakers and ask them "is there anything I can do?" (Grp1)*

*Empathic listening helps me less confront with others, enjoy communication more (Srv1)*

By listening to others empathically, people could overcome the conflict zone in communication to touch the feelings and needs of others (Rosenberg 2015).

*Empathic listening helps me overcome judgement and blaming properly. I know that under any dramatic behaviours is a hidden unmet need. When I can touch those needs, the tension is relieved (Grp3)*

*One day, my colleague complained about the teachers she was working with. Before practising NVC, I had given many pieces of advice. On that day, I listened to her, reflected her needs and feelings. After a while, she expressed how challenging for those teachers working in the political environment and her thoughts about some potential alternatives (Int5)*

Three shared that they use questions to understand and connect with others:

*My primary principle in NVC is "ask for understanding". I spend seventy or eighty percent of communication time for this purpose. Through dialogue, I recognise how differently people use language, understand the issues and express their ideas. Asking not only helps me understand others but also they "see"*

*me. Once we can understand our needs, the possibilities come themselves (Int5)*

Nine expressed a clear and honest expression when they communicate with others:

*I try to follow four components of NVC as much as I could (Int1)*

*I describe what happening triggers my feelings. In that way, the others do not feel being attacked, and they are more empathic with my vulnerability. I propose my requests specifically and invite their further discussion. This communication manner keep us calm even though we are in conflicts (Srv3)*

The honest expression in terms of revealing vulnerability can stop others from hurting participants in communication, and ignite their empathy within them (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015). Three people shared stories about their colleagues who transformed their attitude toward them after their honest expression.

*In a faculty meeting to feedback for the curriculum, a male colleague did not comment on my proposal. Instead, he said: “you are a hypocrite!” After being stunned for a while, I feedback “I am so hurt with this label. I was taught to respect others by smiling even I am not happy”. After that meeting, I have less communication with him, but I recognise he is collaborative with me in work (Srv4)*

The honest expression also helps participants avoid harming others or using ‘power-over’ others (Rosenberg 2015),

*The most visible impact that I’ve noticed is that I say less and fewer things that I would regret later on. I used to state my request in a demanding manner, which made matter worse. After applying NVC, I express myself in a way that doesn’t make the person I’m communicating with go into defensive mode (Grp2)*

The honest expression also provokes support and cooperation for interpersonal productivity (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011),

*I experienced such a negative feeling whenever my supervisor is making jokes about my mistakes. For weeks, I felt I was attacked and incapable. I took a day to reflect what was happening within myself. I also guessed under my supervisor's teasing might be a need for efficiency. I shared with him how I had felt and expressed to him that I need his help to get my needs for learning and contribution done. I hoped that my growth would be helpful for him to ensure the team efficiency. After that talk, the supervisor was more enthusiastic in supporting me. He gave me more projects to learn from the job. Surprisingly, I recognised I no longer felt irritated about his jokes; and at the same time, he reduced and stopped making jokes about my mistake (Grp5)*

#### **4.3.2. Improve relationships**

Although all participants report their relationships in the workplace are improved, only sixteen people describe specifically. Every person describes their relationships by one or more following adjectives: more honest, more open, more profound, closer, more understanding, more trust, more joyful, more sharing, more tolerant, more empathy, and more productive. These good and productive relationships could be the result from empathy and honesty in communication (Leslie and Groves 2004; Eyben 2006a; The Barefoot Collective 2009; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015; Duck and McMahan 2016).

*I apply NVC to any daily situation. For example, during a meeting, I observe if someone looks unhappy as they could not raise their voice or finish their thoughts. I express my care "I guess you feel uncomfortable because you want to be understood better. Do you want to add in any information?" Gradually, our relationships are strengthened, and people become more open to each other (Grp1)*

*I know the more I try to impress others without expressing me honestly, the more my behaviours look silly and make people misunderstand me. This is the first time I really feel being loved by the colleagues, just because I express me authentically (Srv8)*

*I feel trust and more open to share my feelings and needs with my staff (Srv10).*

*My relationships with boss, colleagues and customers are improved. I feel positive about the working environment (Srv6)*

Moreover, it seems that relationships are improved at the secondary level because some participants used NVC for employee development and those employees enhance their relationships.

*I coach NVC for my subordinate and she transforms dramatically from a complaining, demanding to more collaborative manner. She cooperates well with others, asking for feedback and caring for the organization more (Srv2)*

*I choose “needs” as an employee care service. I consult them to figure out their relationship in love and in work. They improve their personal relationship; then they do well their job. They bond with their team, and they engage with the company (Int4).*

#### **4.3.3. Problem solving**

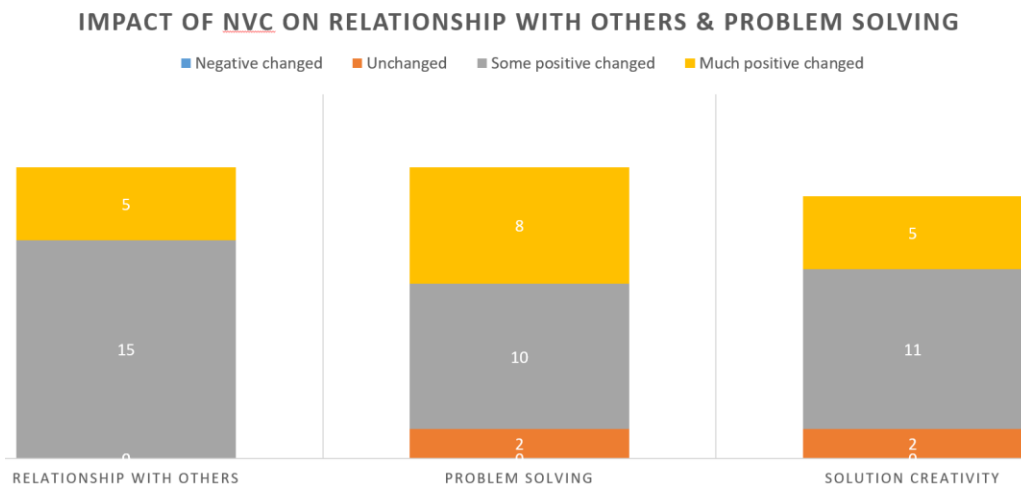
Question of problem-solving is addressed in the survey at two levels: (1) to what extent the participants evaluate whether their problem-solving improved? And (2) do they find alternatives to solve their problem than before? At each level, the participants are invited to provide examples.

There is a gap between improving relationships and improving problem-solving. Only two people in the group find themselves have not made any changes in in problem solving, the rest have.



One inconclusive result is not counted because the respondent stated his/her problem-solving improved somewhat, and creativity in finding solutions is also much improved, but he/she did not provide any evidence or examples.

Fifteen people claimed they were more creative in problem solving, while only twelve provided a specific example of solving the problem. Two people did not give a response to this aspect.



*Figure 4-6 - Impact of NVC on the relationship with others and problem solving*

Overall, people felt less stress when confronted with conflict. Six stated that they complained less, and have transformed from problem-focused to solution-oriented. They collaborated more with others in problem solving ('Power-with'). It seems people become aware of their interests are align with others' and they both participate to create a greater outcome (Rowlands 1997; Chambers 2006)

*For me, NVC is not for soothing our feelings; or avoiding and supressing conflicts. It is a tool for conflicts solved toward growth and well-being. After each conflict, our relationships are strengthened (Grp3)*

*I stop pointing out whose error first to focus on how to balance different needs. This approach helps me less stress with relationships in work (Srv6)*

Eight who did not provide specific examples in problem-solving stated that they focused on their actions in considering choice (one person), empathy with others (three people), and honest expression without hurting others (four people).

*When dealing with conflicts, I reflect the whole process more thoroughly and decide what to propose (Grp3).*

*I fell more courage and confidence to express my thoughts without being scared of hurting people. I feel more relieved getting things off my chest (Srv8)*

*I focus more on connecting than arguing, prioritize to build empathy needs, then solve the problems (Grp2)*

Focusing on needs is the theme of all the twelve successful examples of problem solving (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015).

*When a conflict happens, NVC can help to point out the roots deep down in one's needs. As a result, instead of solving the conflict at the surface level, I can aim to the roots as a long-term solution (Srv1)*

*I support eighty people who are dealing with big customers and their important projects. Conflicts emerge all day because we all get tons of requests from different stakeholders. People focus too much on the difference of strategies which causes persisting conflicts. I keep reminding my team "come back to needs!" (Int4)*

Another respondent explains "only when I can reach the needs of others, creativity in solutions is much more effective. Unless it is ineffective" (Grp5)

*Before using NVC, I only had a mono style in mentioning the problem with any partners. I looked seriously, anxiously and*

*talk straight to the problem. Now, I always check the need of the person receiving the talk and adjust my approach style accordingly. For examples, I would send email in advance for whom need time to prepare; I would make some jokes to whom need more relaxation. People feel more comfortable talking about the problem (Srv9).*

*When I did a Relationship coaching (dating service), I have an unattractive woman who has high demanding in her partner. I seem I got stuck, can't find a suitable partner for her. But I used NVC to dig deep inside her demand to find her real desire. Finally, we (I and her) found 3 different men who can meet her need (Srv7).*

When dealing with the rejection of others to the participants' suggestions, twelve people share that they first confirm the need which that person wants to fulfil and find an alternative to re-negotiate ('power-with') (Rowlands 1997; Chambers 2006; Rosenberg 2015). Three of them state that they stop using 'power-over' with others in these cases (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015).

*I used to get angry or try to manipulate them to get what I want; now I reconsider how to include all needs in the solution (Srv7)*

*I no longer insist and make them feel guilty, but I empathize with their needs (Grp4)*

*I used to demand others a lot. Now I stop and focus on self-empathy when I heard "No". Once I self-empathize enough, I will know what to do next (Grp2)*

However, one person shares she resorts 'coercive power' to solve a critical problem.

*A group of technicians violated the information security which is the top priority in our company. The manager wanted them to make to report and experience some appropriate discipline but not firing. This team are talents, so they seemed not scared of being fired. I need talent retention. I set a meeting with the*

*whole team, listened to their anger towards their manager. Then I referenced to some laws and told them that the company could sue one of them for using the company property illegally (coercive-power). They became aware of the seriousness of the problem. I told them they could protect their colleague by cooperating for a report; and they agreed. I consulted them to revise the report, which reflected their good intention and emphasized they did not cause any consequence yet. The problem was settled down. Even I know I protected them, I still feel I was violent (Int4)*

#### **4.3.4. Power impacts NVC practice in interpersonal relationship**

To investigate if power has any impact on the practitioner in applying NVC, they were asked with whom and in which situation they find NVC is difficult or easy to apply.

Four successful cases in applying NVC across the hierarchical power would appear to be in line with the literature review about NVC in which participants can connect to others' needs (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015). *"Hierarchy does not matter for me, it is all about if I can connect to their needs"* (Int5). Under the lenses of NVC, as long as we can develop the empathy to see that we are all human beings, all needs are worthy, we can find the strategies to fulfil needs for all (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015). *"Any boss has his/her own needs, whenever working with them, I take time to empathise with their needs first"*, said (Int4). These findings indicate conformity with the view that empathy reveals humanity, connects human to human (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015) and brings harmony to the workplace (Miyashiro and Colonna 2011). However, Rosenberg (2015: loc.2181) states that "it's harder to empathize with those who appear to possess more power, status, or resources".

Five people reported that it is challenging to apply NVC to their superiors, especially to the direct boss. One of them is the only person who rarely used NVC

because “it is difficult to apply to my colleagues and my boss” (Srv5). However, other answers of this respondent reflect that he/she had negative experiences from their superiors and one of these experiences relating to NVC and ‘power-over’. Other three were afraid of the ‘power-over’ from their boss

*They usually use their power to intimidate, and they use their rational mind rather than talk about feelings and needs (Grp4)*

*I still feel unconfident and scared of whom is older and more powerful than me (Srv8)*

*I cannot bear dominance, and I have a negative belief in superiors using their ‘power-over’ their subordinators. Therefore, I am reluctant to apply NVC properly to my superiors, especially with my direct boss (Srv3)*

Their sharing indicates the fear of ‘power-over’ may prevent participants to apply NVC properly (Reeler 2007; The Barefoot Collective 2009).

Nevertheless, it could be seen that NVC is less applicable to aggressive behaviours, and this can be associated with one particular expression of power, namely ‘power-over’ (Gaventa 2006). This kind of power could be manifested in a person or in some specific situation. Four reported it is difficult to apply NVC when they are under the pressure of ‘power-over’,

*Hierarchical power does not matter. I only get trouble in applying NVC with aggressive people who try to intimidate me (Int2)*

*NVC is least feasible in conflicts because people usually cannot control their emotions and they try to dominate each other (Srv1)*

Among four leaders in the participants, one found it was hard to apply NVC to his/her subordinates because of the imbalance of power “my staff become nervous

*and unnatural when they talk with me. I know they keep a distance from me... I want to connect with them as human to human (Grp2)''.*

As presented in chapter two, exercising power creates more meaning and impact than having power. One person can choose to use his/her power resources to power over others or to empower others (The Barefoot Collective 2009). Therefore, the survey focuses on the power expression. However, there are some findings relating to power resources which negatively impacted the practitioners to apply NVC. I could not investigate further causes of these limitations.

Two stated that NVC is less effective in conflicts of 'reward power' (interests, money). In these cases, people may not connect to needs because extrinsic rewards and money are not basic human needs (Rosenberg 2015) and interests locate at the core of conflicts (Martin 1992; Swedberg 2005a; Swedberg 2005b; Fukuyama 2015).

Eight people indicated that they are influenced by 'expert power', in which three are impacted by hierarchical power additionally. They shared that they were not confident to apply NVC to superiors, they were more confident to apply it to the same or lower job level, and they also felt more confident to apply NVC to whom having less 'expert power' than they do, such as their students or beneficiaries. Similarity, two participants responded that the inequality in 'expert power' limited them to use NVC to some specific people *"I don't have enough reputation to convince them"* (Srv9). It reflects an overlap between 'positional power' and 'expert power' that impacts on the NVC application of these practitioners. It seems 'expert power' give them more decision-making power (Polsby 1980; Wrong 1995; Lukes 2005; Gaventa 2006)

*It is easier to apply to those who are equal. Teachers and students usually need my advice, so I feel more confident to use NVC with them (Srv8)*

Different stories from the participants showed that ‘expert power’ is crucial at work. The findings revealing the impact of ‘expert power’ confirm what was stated in the literature review about the importance of capability and results in work (Covey and Merrill 2006). ‘Expert-power’ may encourage people to earn for it and try to show what they are capable of.

*To support the technical team, I must learn their knowledge. At first, they, of course, did not trust me because I am dumb. Their judgements made them complaint about my other supports, but I know they could not find any better service because my strengths are dealing with different stakeholders (Int4)*

*My organisations include a dozen of brilliant fellows, and we usually debate each other in planning meetings. Everyone tries to impress others with his or her knowledge unless he/she is incompetent. On the one hand, I want to raise my voice. On the other hand, I do not want to be aggressive (Int5)*

As mentioned before, ‘expert power’ is ‘power-within’ (The Barefoot Collective 2009); and if people have good intentions (Covey and Merrill 2006; Rosenberg 2015) and focus on the needs theory (Max-Neef 1992; Rosenberg 2015), they can resource ‘power-with’ for a common greater result for themselves and for the organisation.

*After sometimes I supported them in negotiation, they believed that we were on the same boat and then they cooperated with me more (Int4)*

*Since applying NVC, I apply empathic listening to acknowledge others’ ideas first, then I add in mine. This approach creates collective wisdom, effectiveness and harmonious environment (Int5)*

#### **4.3.5. Summary about the relationship with others**

The findings in this section are compatible with a literature review about nonviolent communication, power and human needs.

All the participants claimed improving communication including empathic listening, clear and honest expression and dialogue to others.

Empathic listening allows practitioners to reduce violent communication in terms of blaming and judgement (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015), and eliminate ‘power-over’. Empathic listening can empower others to find solutions for their issue and make decision themselves (‘power-to’) (Gaventa 2006).

Dialogues provoke the mutual understanding between practitioners and their partners. As a result, people can understand the issue and see each other’s needs. Clear and honest expression is about expressing four components of NVC properly for both sides in communication (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015).

Honest expression focuses on the issue and personal feelings rather than a personal attack. Therefore, honest expression helps participants avoid violent communication (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015). The honest expression also provokes empathy in other people (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015) which leads to ‘power-with’ in term of having more cooperation and support (Gaventa 2006; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011).

Empathy and honesty in communication define good relationships (Leslie and Groves 2004; Eyben 2006a; The Barefoot Collective 2009; Miyashiro and Colonna 2011; Rosenberg 2015). Most respondents described the improvement in different positive qualities. Relationships were improved for not only participants, but their



secondary relationships such as staff, coaches, and students because some participants trained or coached NVC to others.

Good relationships make people more supportive and cooperative (Leslie and Groves 2004; The Barefoot Collective, 2009; Duck and McMahan 2016). On top of that, NVC builds an authentic and empathic relationship in which people can fulfil their needs (Kashtan 2015; Rosenberg 2015). The findings show that NVC can build ‘power-with’ in problem solving and dealing with conflicts. In particular, they tried to connect to mutual needs to figure out alternatives for their issues with successful examples. One case reported using coercive power in conflicts. Those who could not get the expected results inform that they have the opportunity for not intimidating others (stop ‘power-over’), but enhancing their empathy, expressing honestly and strengthening relationships.

Four reported that they applied NVC successfully across the differences in power resources thanks to empathy. This strengthens the arguments that empathy can transform the negative images of others (Rosenberg 2004; Kashtan 2015). The findings also confirm that it is difficult to empathise with those who have more power than we do — the pressure of ‘power-over’ limits NVC effectiveness in this regard for forty percent of participants in this sample.

Two cases stated that conflicts in so-called ‘reward power’ makes NVC less effective (Martin 1992; Swedberg 2005a; Swedberg 2005b; Fukuyama 2015; Rosenberg 2015).

The findings also prove expert knowledge is meaningful in work relationships (Covey and Merrill 2006). Eight respondents of this study were impacted by ‘expert power’ in applying NVC. However, stories shared by participants can shed light on

opportunities in which people can take ‘power-with’ to optimize ‘expert power’ for all stakeholders (The Barefoot Collective 2009).

#### **4.4. The Relationship with the Organisation**

In this study, the relationship with the organisation is where NVC shows the least effectiveness. Eight participants informed that they experienced uncomfortable regulations; twelve people shared their negative experience in an implicit culture. It is noted that none of the organisational leaders confirmed there was any regulation or culture which impacts negatively on employees in their organisations.

##### **4.4.1. With Legitimate Power**

All the annoying regulations violate four primary needs of employees, including freedom, effectiveness, clarity, and connection (Rosenberg 2015). All participants stated that these issues impact negatively on their job performance (Rosenberg 2015). Five out of eight cases take actions to pursue their needs.

Three cases have been proposed to the management team for solutions. Participants reported that they expressed empathy for the company, self-empathy from the employees, and suggested strategies. Two are waiting for feedback, and one was successful. This is an example of attempted ‘power-with’ from the employees (Rowlands 1997; Gaventa 2006).

*We, not only the staff but also the customers and suppliers, were stressful with the complicated procurement policy. After many complaints, our team read it comprehensively and knew its purpose is for the transparency among departments. We felt more empathetic with them. At the same time, we figured out some potential adjustments. It is much better now (Srv6)*

One person consciously chose to fulfil her needs out of the ‘reward power’ (Rosenberg 2015),

*The school has extra payment for classes with over fifty students. However, I can connect with students in those cases, so I choose classes with lesser students even though it impacts my income (Srv4)*

One person reported that she successfully dealt with the manager in order to fulfil her need. However, this case raises another concern of abusing NVC, which will be discussed in the final part of chapter five.

#### **4.4.2. With the Implicit Culture**

Three out of twelve participants reported taking actions to fulfil their needs; one of them successfully changed the behaviours of others; another two chose not to join the negative culture.

*It took me six months to adjust the punctuality of my workshops because people think coming late is something common sense. Before every workshop, I wrote a note expressing my respect for others’ time, and I asked for the same from them. I promised my workshop would start in time and people could come not later than ten minutes. After that time, we do not welcome anyone. Now, people even come earlier than expected. Vietnamese people are not as unpunctual as we thought. We allow them to be unpunctual (Int2)*

*In my company, who is owning minor roles usually could not feedback about the negative behaviours of their superiors. In contrast, our superiors usually comment on the personal life of their employees with the excuse of using NVC. I sent my feedback about the problem, and I left the company after that. Even though I can change the problem, at least I could raise my voice for the injustice (Srv5)*

Two people transformed their negative attitudes towards empathy with others. However, they could not change the social norms within their environment. This matched with literature review which says that mass participant can combat social bias and norms (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992)

*People keep complaining about others to me. At first, I was so annoyed hearing that. Now, I choose to listen to them from the heart. They can relieve their negative feelings (Srv8)*

Another two people expressed their need for clarity of the organization culture, but they did not follow the NVC components in their expression, and no change happened yet.

All the remaining five cases relate to the social bias of power in which bosses' needs are prioritised, and no participant took actions.

*The implicit culture in our organisation relates to the sense of belonging. I can say to my colleagues that I am overload and I need rest, but I cannot do that with my boss. I still want them to see my contribution (Int3)*

*Even though we have a policy for making an appointment, boss' clients still can insert at any time, and it impacts other clients who are really in need. I am trying to empathize with the case manager (Srv1)*

*We should help the boss in personal issues, and it is unofficially recorded for the annual performance. It is unfair (Srv7)*

*The discrimination between expats and local employees make us withdraw from any conflicts relating to expats. We are nervous, but we do not know what to do (Srv6)*

The findings are in line with the literature review about hegemonic power of social bias and norm (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992); violence (Leory 1974); and NVC (Krzinik 2013, Rosenberg 2015). NVC holds that comparing someone as worthier

than the others is hurtful communication (Krzisnik 2013). Besides, social bias and norms systematically benefit for a group on the cost of the others (Bachrach and Botwinick 1992). Social bias and norms can adjust people's beliefs so that they could accept being oppressed as the status quo (Lukes 1986; Bachrach and Botwinick 1992; Wrong 1995; Gutting 2005; Lukes 2005; Gramsci 2010). As a consequence, these aspects of hegemonic power subvert and thwart people's pursuit of their ultimate goals (Lukes 1986).

#### **4.4.3. Summary about the relationship with the organisation**

In terms of transforming legitimate power and the same ratio in implicit culture, a successful case shown in this NVC study shows its modest effectiveness on transforming relationships between the practitioners and their organisations. The potential risk of this issue will be discussed in the following section about the interaction among the relationships.

#### **4.5. The Interaction among Relationships**

The findings seem to be in line with Scott-Villiers' (2005) debates about the impact of activists' and leaders' responsible well-being to relevant people or beneficiaries. In particular, five people confirmed that if they cannot practice self-empathy, they cannot empathise with others; or if they are violent to themselves, they may be violent to others.

*If I forget to connect with my feelings and needs, I become harsh with myself and bitchy with others...one day the human resource manager shouted at me "can you stop intimidating yourself and others, none wants to be useless" (Int4)*

The more people can connect to their feelings, the more they can control their feelings during interpersonal communication: "*self-empathy help me to ask for a*

*pause when I felt overwhelmed during a conflict. It prevents me from hurting others” (Int5).*

One participant shared *“I understand there was a hidden need under any annoying behaviour. I was lazy to check what it could be, so I just accepted it to tide over my judgement” (Srv6).* Additionally, another participant reported his/her empathy to others increased while they blamed themselves more than before practising NVC, a concern that practitioners may self-sacrifice (Neff 2011) or rationalise the injustice that emerges. As a consequence, he/she may disconnect with his/her feelings/needs and responsible well-being (Rosenberg 2015; Scott-Villiers 2005).

Two reported that when they recognised that they were blaming or judging others, they connected to self-empathy to see what their underlying needs are and how they can fulfil them. This concurs with the view that under any evaluation is a met/unmet need (Rosenberg 2015). If one person can find another strategy to fulfil their needs, they may be freer than when depending on others. In other words, when they change the relationship, the power changes (Reeler 2007).

The findings seem to confirm interactions occurring among three levels of relationship (Reeler 2007). If one person is unfree in one level, they could be unfree in other levels (Reeler 2007). The more people can understand and accept their needs; the more people can have the courage to express themselves (three participants reported this) and take action out of a sense of reward or punishment (Rosenberg 2105) *“I do not join the culture of rumour”*, said Sr4. Similarly, if one is in fear or self-doubt, they cannot create the change as they would want (The Barefoot Collective 2009). It could be argued, the personal fear of ‘power-over’ limits participants to apply NVC to more powerful people, or the experience of ‘power-over’ in their previous/existing workplace relationships may limit their hope in power transformation.

Six participants shared the perspective that it is more challenging to apply NVC to those who have different values. This points to the risk that personal values may prompt moralistic judgements which cause violence in an interpersonal relationship (Rosenberg 2015)

Among twelve negative experiences relating to implicit culture, seven involved the hierarchical power. One chose to leave his/her organisation; one chose not to join his/her boss's behaviours. Others felt frustrated and hopeless. These worrying findings raise the concern about the internalisation of social bias and norms into individual beliefs which may make them take oppression as the status quo (Lukes 1986; Bachrach and Botwinick 1992; Wrong 1995; Gutting 2005; Lukes 2005; Gramsci 2010). This political un-freedom may eliminate participants' hope in power transformation (Reeler 2007).

#### **4.6. Conclusions**

The findings seem to be in line with the literature review about NVC in transforming 'power-over' to 'power-within', 'power-with', 'power-to' in intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. However, they don't confirm any power transformation in legitimate power and implicit culture.

In this sample size of twenty participants, the findings are compatible with theories about power, relationships and NVC. In particular, most participants suggest the potential to develop 'power-within', enhance communication, and improve relationships. More than half of the responses show evidence of problem solving in which people act together to fulfil needs of every stakeholder ('power-with'). The findings also indicate that NVC is used to empower others to figure out solutions for their issues ('power-to'). Some of the less positive findings reveal that only a minority of participants felt they could apply NVC across the hierarchical structures

of power, and just under half of the respondents limit their NVC practice under the fear of ‘power-over’. NVC shows only modest effectiveness in transforming instances of social bias and norms. Finally, the findings also point to the possible impact of ‘expert power’ and ‘reward power’ in applying NVC at the workplace.

The following chapter will review the survey overall and align the research question with the literature review.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

The chapter briefly summarises the literature review of power resource and power expression at the workplace, and explains how NVC could transform the power expression. It also presents how much the findings match the literature review to figure out if practising NVC could help to transform the power expression at the workplace. Finally, the chapter proposes some further research and application in development.

The expression of power includes ‘power-over’ and empowerment. The workplace is where people gather to take actions in pursuit of common goals. In the workplace, people are controlled by different power resources which have been explored in both chapters 2 and 4. One can hold at least one power resource in his/her organisational relationships. Individual, as well as organisational well-being, depend on power expression within that organisation and between organisations with each other. In particular, one person holding a prominent position (‘positional power’) is often supported by the regulations and laws in the organisation. However, if he/she is self-doubted or self-hatred, he/she may not fulfil his/her role performance (Clark and Robboy 1992). Likewise, if he/she takes advantage of his/her ‘positional power’ to intimidate others, people could fight back or be oppressed depending on how they internalise that interaction model (Foucault and Gordon 1980; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982; Galbraith 1983; Wrong 1995; Rowlands 1997). As a consequence, the organisation may not achieve its vision, or it may add to current social inequality and conflicts. In contrast, if one supports the others (with ‘power-to’) to improve their competency and believe in themselves (‘power-within’) or take actions with them (‘power-with’) for the common benefits, the

organisation can achieve its vision and embrace the social cohesion at the same time (The Barefoot Collective 2009).

For decades, people and organisations have been fighting against poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change. During this journey, relevant stakeholders unconsciously embrace social barriers by using violent communication. The communication causing emotional harms could include, but not limited to (1) demanding others to fulfil our needs despite their unwillingness ('power-over') (Sullivan 2007; Krzysnik 2013); (2) comparing some people as more worthy than others; (3) blaming one's own and others' actions, thoughts, or feelings; (4) labelling or diagnosing; and (5) making moralistic judgments and evaluations which imply right and wrong, good and bad (Krzysnik 2013). Therefore, it is time for all individual and organisations to act together in embracing the principles and practices of NVC. To enable the possibility for cooperation for sustainable change, people need to eliminate hate within themselves and towards others, and at the same time, they need to cultivate the courage to take actions for a better life.

NVC is one of the tools nurturing empathy and compassion, which can help people to take action without anger. NVC believes all behaviour, including communication, should be intended to meet one or more universal needs. There are many strategies to meet needs. People only resort to violence because they do not know about other strategies, or they misunderstand between needs and strategies. Conflicts happen at the strategy rather than at the needs level. People recognise needs through feelings.

This research has examined how, in three NVC processes, people first practice self-empathy to connect with their needs. After that, they empathise with others to connect with their needs. Finally, they honestly express feelings and needs perceived for both parties and suggest strategies to fulfil needs for both. In using

self-empathy and empathy, people activate their humanity, see the beauty in each other and can cease violent communication. Compassion manifests through honest expression of our needs that results in ‘power-to’, ‘power-with’, or ‘power-within’. Collective compassion is perceived as being able to change social bias and norms which can imprison people in their work situations.

Through twenty (20) people coming from eight (8) NGOs, eight (8) private enterprises and four (4) FDI organisations, the findings show that NVC significantly improved intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. On top of that, over half of the participants shared their stories of improving problem-solving. However, in this study, NVC seems to have only a modest impact on transforming the ‘legitimate power’; and social bias and norms. It is noted that findings confirm the interaction among relationships so that social activists and organisational leaders can shed light on the impact they can bring to the social change.

## **5.2. Key Results**

Both the findings and literature review focus on to what extent and in what way NVC transformed the expression of power in workplace relationships within organisations in Viet Nam.

Most of the participants enhanced their compassion to accept themselves more, took actions to fulfil their needs, and felt more positive about themselves at work. They also improved depth of their relationships. More than half of participants increased the problem-solving, which was beneficial for all stakeholders. However, findings show minimal result in addressing legitimate power and implicit culture.

All successful stories revealed that the participants properly applied NVC principles. Participants empathised with themselves, with others and practiced

honest expression for both sides. In honest expression, practitioners mentioned observing their feelings and that they revealed their met/unmet needs. From this point, they suggested strategies to fulfil the needs of both sides. This conversation approach helped stakeholders to limit hurting communication and focus on good intention and solution.

### **5.3. Insights from the Analysis**

Observing the findings, I raise some concerns.

Six out of seven negative experiences about hierarchical implicit power belong to the education sector. Furthermore, three out of four cases who found it difficult to apply NVC to their superiors (hierarchical power) came from NGOs. These findings suggest development practitioners should be more aware of their responsible well-being in building social change since they impact many people in the society (Scott-Villiers 2005).

Besides, the findings do not reveal that participants (intend to) gather the collective power in transforming the implicit culture (social bias and norms). To assure that NVC still preserves the nonviolence philosophy, fighting against the injustice but doing no harm, I suggest NVC should be used with others tools such as critical reflection to increase to awareness about harmful behaviours.

Findings show the importance of ‘expert power’ in workplace relationships, both in NGOs and the business sector. ‘Expert power’ is ‘power-within’, but it can be negatively switched into ‘power-over’ (The Barefoot Collective 2009). Because the survey limits its scope in power expression, I could not figure out in what way expert knowledge can limit NVC applications. This issue could be studied further.

Finally, NVC can help gain ‘personal power’ because it helps practitioners to enhance their relationships. Therefore, it also can be shifted to ‘power-over’ if the practitioner takes advantage of NVC for his/her own benefit without caring for others’.

*The company allows employees to take one vacation day each month only. I know they want to prevent the personnel deficit in some season. I know how to manage it, so I deal with the manager for my exception (Int1)*

#### **5.4. Conclusions**

As expressed from the beginning, the continuous effort of International Development is helping people to free themselves at different levels of relationships (Reeler 2007), creating a general development, inclusion, well-being (Max-Neff 1992; Willis 2011), and peace for all (Rosenberg 2004). Findings can cherish a hope that NVC could build capacity (‘power-within’) for individuals to raise their voice positively and constructively. At the same time, NVC can enhance the support (‘power-to’) and collaboration (‘power-with’) in collective actions. NVC may bring political, economic and civil society closer in the Social Model 4.0, which requires more and more collaboration of all parties.

## Appendix 1 – Questionnaires

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### *Survey questionnaires*

#### *THE IMPACT OF NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION ON POWER EXPRESSION IN THE WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS*

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#### I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Type of organisation:	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-profit <input type="checkbox"/> State business	<input type="checkbox"/> Private business <input type="checkbox"/> Others	<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Investment business
2. Field of business:	<input type="checkbox"/> Education & Counselling <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacture	<input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Finance	<input type="checkbox"/> Healthcare <input type="checkbox"/> Others

3. Major communication partners	Number (approximately)
Superior:	
Subordinates:	
Peers:	
Customers:	
Others:	

4. How long have you practised NVC in your work (years or months):

5. How often do you apply NVC into workplace communication?

☐ Rarely                      ☐ Sometimes                      ☐ Very often                      ☐ Always

6. In general, to what extent do you find NVC changes your relationships at work?

☐ Very negatively impact                      ☐ Somehow negatively impact                      ☐ No impact                      ☐ Somehow positive impact                      ☐ Very positive impact

In what way does NVC impact your relationships at work?

7. In general, how effectively does NVC help you solve the problem at work?

☐ Less effective                      ☐ Unchanged                      ☐ Somewhat effective                      ☐ Much more effective

In what way does your problem solving change since you have applied NVC?

## II. RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

1. How much does NVC help you to connect with your feelings and needs?

☐ Less connect                      ☐ Unchanged                      ☐ Somewhat connect                      ☐ Much more connect

How does this connection impact your communication at work?

2. How much does NVC change your self-compassion?

☐ Less self-compassion                      ☐ Unchanged                      ☐ More self-compassion

3. How do you deal with self-blaming and self-judgment?
4. How do you deal with mistakes and imperfection?
5. How does NVC change your feelings about yourself in work contexts?

### III. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

<p>1. How much does NVC help you to connect with others' feelings and needs?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Less connect              <input type="checkbox"/> Unchanged              <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat connect              <input type="checkbox"/> Much more connect       </p> <p>How does this connection change your way to communicate with others at work?</p>
<p>2. How effectively does NVC help you figure out alternative strategies to fulfil all parties' needs?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Less effective              <input type="checkbox"/> Unchanged              <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat effective              <input type="checkbox"/> Much more effective       </p> <p>Tell some experience when you found other alternatives:</p>



<p>Tell some experience when someone changed their decision after you applied NVC with him or her:</p>
<p>3. Tell experience how you have dealt with blaming and judgement in relationship with others since you have practised NVC?</p>
<p>4. Talk about experience how did you deal with the answer “No” to your request before and after applying NVC?</p>
<p>5. To whom are NVC effective most? And which factor contributes to this effectiveness?</p>
<p>6. To whom is NVC effective less? And which factor contributes to this ineffectiveness?</p>
<p>7. In general, in what situation you find NVC most effective and less effective for you in communicating with other at work?</p>

#### IV. RELATIONSHIP WITH ORGANISATION

<p>1. Is there any regulation at the workplace which makes you feel uncomfortable?</p> <p>- Can you describe it?</p> <p>- What are your unmet needs?</p> <p>- Do you know anyone else experienced negative feelings by these regulations?</p> <p>- How does this regulation impact your work before applying NVC?</p> <p>- Do you take any action to get your needs met?</p> <p>- How does your action (or not taking action) impact your work now?</p>
<p>2. Is there any implicit culture in the workplace, which makes you feel uncomfortable?</p> <p>- Can you describe it?</p> <p>- What are your unmet needs?</p> <p>- Do you know anyone else experienced negative feelings by this implicit culture?</p> <p>- How does this culture impact your work before applying NVC?</p> <p>- Do you take any action to get your needs met?</p> <p>- How does your action (or not taking action) impact your work now?</p>

## **Appendix 2 – Group Discussion and Interview questions**

1. What is the most significant impact of NVC on your work relationships?
2. How do you find your problem-solving change since you have applied NVC?
3. What are you pleased most about yourself since you have applied NVC?  
How does it contribute to your work?
4. How do you feel about yourself at work now?
5. How have you dealt with self-judgement, self-blame and your imperfection?
6. Tell some experiences when you successfully used NVC to convince others to change their mind.
7. To whom you find NVC is easy to apply? Why?
8. To whom you find, it is too difficult to apply NVC? Why?
9. Do you experience any difficulty applying NVC to your boss? Can you tell more?
10. In which situations you find easy and difficult to apply NVC?
11. How have you dealt with someone rejecting your suggestion since you have applied NVC?
12. Can you share an experience in which you felt the others tried to intimidate you, how did you deal with them since you have practised NVC?
13. How about anger, judgment and blame? Do you find any change after using NVC?
14. What regulation in your company makes you irritated most? Can you share about it and how have you dealt with it?
15. Is there any implicit culture in your organisation which make you very uncomfortable? Why? How does it impact? How have you dealt with that?

### Appendix 3 - Data coding

Level of relationship	Detailed aspects		Type of power-expression (number of stories)			
			Power-within	Power-to	Power-with	Power-over
Relationship with Self	Self-empathy					
	Self-compassion	Self-acceptance				
		Take action toward needs				
		Feelings about Self				
Relationship with Others	Enhance communication	Empathic listening				
		Dialogues				
		Clear and honest expression				
	Improve relationships					
	Problem solving					
	Power impacts NVC practice in interpersonal relationship					
Relationship with the organisation	With the legitimate power					
	With the implicit power					
Interaction between relationships						

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## Appendix VIII

### Ethical Standards in Research at the Department of International Development - Supervisor's Form

To be completed by the Supervisor and the Researcher **in advance** of any field research being undertaken and sent to the MA Co-ordinator.

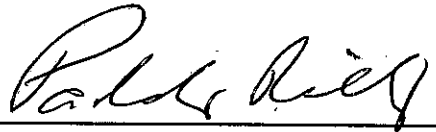
We, the undersigned, have discussed the Department of International Development's policy on ethical standards and its implications for carrying out the following research:

The role of Nonviolent Communication in addressing power:  
How practising Nonviolent Communication affects power expression in the workplace relationships  
some examples in Viet Nam

#### Title of Research

As the research supervisor, I am satisfied that the researcher has made appropriate arrangements to address any ethical challenges which may arise:

Signature of Supervisor

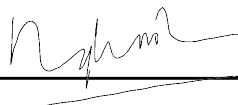


As the researcher, I agree to make every effort to abide by the Department of International Development's Ethical Research Policy, including the following key considerations:

- The safety and security of the research participants and the researcher is paramount – the principle of 'do no harm' should be applied
- 
- The researcher should act with honesty and integrity throughout the research process and the principles of academic honesty apply
- 
- Research participants should be shown the highest level of respect in all aspects of research
- 
- All research should be adequately planned and prepared by the researcher who is expected to apply appropriate, honest and rigorous research tools and processes in all stages of the research process
- 
- Researchers should always seek the consent of research participants and not undertake research without trying to ensure that research participants understand the anticipated implications of their participation in the research process
- 
- Researchers should keep an open mind and should refrain from manipulating any information received to suit their own ends
-

- The researcher should inform her/himself of the culture, traditions and context of research participants and should do their utmost not to cause any offence or to disrespect people
- 
- The researcher should familiarise themselves with language appropriate to each stage of the research and act accordingly
- 
- The researcher should inform participants in the research of the research process prior to undertaking any data collection, e.g., how the research will be conducted and how the data will be used and disseminated
- 
- Confidentiality and anonymity of those involved in the research should be respected, where possible. Where a decision is made to 'name' research participants, an appropriate justification for same should be made, bearing in mind all the other ethical principles
- 
- The highest standards of Child Protection practices should apply to all research. Students undertaking research with children should consult the Department of International Development Child Protection Guidelines
- 
- National law and principles of best practice should apply in the case of child protection and any disclosures of abuse, self-harm or criminal activity. In the case of sensitive research, researchers should prepare themselves for possible disclosure and inform themselves of the national laws related to their particular area of research. Where disclosures are made, the researcher should inform themselves of any mandatory reporting commitments they may have, which might over-ride the principle of confidentiality
- 
- The researcher's position and interests in the topic or research area should be made transparent through the reflexive consideration of the effect of the researcher's relationship with the researched, their gender, bias, power, culture or ethnicity on the research
- 
- The researcher should inform participants that they are undertaking research as a Department of International Development student. They should consult the Department of International Development Participant's Handbook, Section 6, Course Participants' Rights and Responsibilities for further information about the code of conduct required. If students are also doing research on behalf of an organisation, they should inform participants of this
- 
- Where researchers are unclear about the ethical implications of their research approach or tools planned, they should seek advice from their supervisor prior to action. No primary research should be undertaken without 'sign off' from their supervisor on the methodology and ethical implications of their research.

**Signature of Researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Date:** August 24, 2019