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Beginning from the Very Beginning: The Role of Family Environment in Shaping Adolescents' Nonviolent Behavior

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Abstract

Based on the prevalence of violence in our current world, including Ethiopia, the importance of nonviolent behavior (NVB), and the scarcity of empirical studies of factors that contribute to NVB, this study sought to examine the role of Ethiopian adolescents' family environments (FEs) in their NVBs. The study employed a quantitative approach and was conducted on Ethiopian adolescents attending secondary school (grades 11 &12) in Addis Ababa. 274 randomly selected adolescents (170 females, 104 males) participated in the study. Questionnaires[composed of demographic questions and two scales, the Family Environment Scale (FES) and the Diamond Scale of Nonviolence (DSN)], were used to collect data. The data was analyzed by descriptive statistics, correlation, and structural equation modeling (SEM). It was found that the six components of FE accounted for a substantial amount of variance (R^2 = 31.80%) in NVB. The structural model that guided the study (which was labeled the Peace Engineering Model) was found to fit the adolescents' data adequately and thus was applicable in explaining the relationships between NVB and components of FE. Overall, it was concluded that the adolescents' FEs play vital roles in shaping NVB. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings were discussed.

Keywords*: nonviolent behavior, peace, family environment, Family Environment Scale, adolescents*

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Background and Rationale of the Study

Our modern social world is replete with conflict and violence. There is a need for an urgent and radical transformation of our society away from a culture of violence to a culture of peace (COP). Mayton (2001) considers nonviolence as a positive strategy to build COP. Sometimes referred to as nonviolent behavior (NVB), nonviolence refers to interactions involving words, deeds, and experiences with others and the self that are not intentionally harmful but geared towards peacefulness (Mayton, 2009). According to the United Nations General Assembly (UN, 1999), COP is a culture characterized by values, attitudes, and behaviors that reject violence, prevent conflicts by addressing their root causes, and solve problems through dialogue and negotiation. UN proposed that COP is composed of eight components: peace education, equitable and sustainable development, respect for human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, tolerance, international security, and free flow of information.

Ethiopia's cultures have many pro-peace values, including hospitality, cooperation, respectfulness, and tolerance (Alagaw, 2012; Habtamu, 1995; Habtamu, 2013). This culture also has long-held traditions of nonviolent conflict resolution at the local level, such as Aba Gedas, Mereto, Weresh, and Beaalalti, which play important roles in maintaining collective security, peace, order, equality, and justice (Mitiku &Tilahun, 2019). Nonetheless, history witnesses that this cradle of human ancestry is not immune to violence. As in other developing countries, the Ethiopian socio-political culture has been characterized mainly by a rigid hierarchical structure. This rigid social structure is the antithesis of nonviolence. Throughout recorded history, including the *Zemene Mesafint* or Era of the Princes' warlords, violence has

been part of Ethiopians' life. Power struggle and war among its various regional groups as well as the Ethiopian state and foreign powers (e.g., Egypt, Sudan, Italy, and Somalia) and the resulting oppression, authoritarianism, and exploitation were characteristics of the country's polity (Alagaw, 2012; Habtamu, 2013; Paulos, 2011; Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003). Even currently, Ethiopia is experiencing intra-state violent conflict.

The direct and indirect impact of such large-scale violent conflict on Ethiopian youth/adolescents is incontestable. Adolescence is a risk period for violence (Marcus, 2007); in addition, Ethiopian adolescents experience violence at schools, both in actual and broadcasted sports and in their families (Mitiku &Tilahun, 2019). This implies that, let alone realizing COP by achieving positive peace (i.e., absence of violence and presence of justice), even attaining negative peace (i.e., absence of violence) has been challenging for Ethiopia.

Although some scholars find it hard to imagine that nonviolence has a place in our violent world today, others believe that it is precisely in such a world that nonviolence must persist (Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galace, 2008; de Rivera, 2009a; Hess, 2009). In line with the UN's COP, an important lesson for Ethiopians is that conflict resolution must move beyond military response and address the root causes of conflicts to come out of the long history of the vicious cycle of violence. Thus, nonviolence, tolerance, human rights and democracy have to be inculcated in every citizen (Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galace, 2008; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2005).

In the academic literature in general, violence has been more at the center of empirical attention than nonviolence. It appears that both empirical inattention and

practical invisibility of nonviolence thwarted the development of advanced theories and models (Mayton, 2001; Mayton, 2009; Quinn, 2019); Tanabe, 2016). However, the feasibility of nonviolence in the social and political arena has been realized recently. Supporting this argument, Summy (2005) indicates that while nonviolence has been part of the Taoist, Buddhist, Jewish, and New Testament scriptures, it is only in the past 100 years that, through one of the oft-cited exemplars of nonviolence, namely Gandhi who led the Indian independence from the British colony, nonviolence became an indispensable force in shaping people and their political lives. While Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. approached nonviolence from a political perspective, peace psychologists have been considering nonviolence as the heart of peace psychology because both peacemaking and peacebuilding employ nonviolent techniques (Mayton, 2009).

According to Mayton (2009), some theories and models of nonviolence were developed in peace psychology (e.g., the Theory of Nonviolence developed by Kool and the Model of Peaceful Selfhood developed by Brenes). Unfortunately, as indicated by Mayton (2009), data to support these theories and models are either nonexistent or just starting to emerge. Moreover, Mayton (2012) points out that although both Kool's theory and Brenes's model deal with nonviolence at the individual level, neither of them delineates the dynamics between different levels of nonviolence. The Diamond Model of Nonviolence (DMN) developed by Mayton et al. (2011) was in response to the demand for a comprehensive model that examines dynamics among the levels of nonviolence. DMN, which is used to conceptualize NVB in the present study, delineates four distinct types of nonviolence: *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, *societal*, and *world nonviolence* (see Table 1). In the present study,

DMN was selected as a theoretical framework because it addresses levels of nonviolence broadly along with the Diamond Scale of Nonviolence for measuring them.

Yet, the DMN does not hint at the environmental aspects from which one would start building COP. Azar et al. (2009) contend that "the attainment of peace begins with one of the smallest building blocks of society: the family." (p. 319). Through the quality of the family environment (FE), a family can be considered the first school in which its members learn a myriad of behaviors, including love or hatred, nonviolence or violence, and harming or helping others. FE is the perceived social functioning of the family of two or more persons living in a house (Moos & Moos, 2009). The writer of this article believes that if it is incorporated into a person's lifestyle, beginning from the family and promoted by other institutions, including schools, nonviolence can be an effective tool for building COP within and between nations. This article examines components of the FE that might foster or impede NVB.

In the present study, FE is conceptualized from the perspective of the social climate model (Moos & Moos, 2009). According to this model, perceptions that people attach to an environment or a setting can be used to conceptualize the psychological effects of that setting. Accordingly, environments have three major dimensions: relationship (R), personal growth (PG), and system maintenance (SM). These dimensions, in turn, comprise 10 components, from which six were selected and examined in the present study (see Table 1). According to Moos and Moos (2009), some of the 10 FES subscales relevant to a study can be selected and used. Thus, in the present study, it was thought that combinations of scores on each pair that

make up the dimensions (two subscales for each of the three dimensions) will produce a more balanced and high-quality score. For instance, families high in cohesion and low in conflict can be said to have high-quality relationships. Likewise, a family that focuses on achievement orientation at the expense of ethical and moral issues may not successfully promote healthy personal growth. Similarly, focusing on control without providing the necessary organization may stifle the desired effect that the family envisages to bring about in its members.

The social climate model was chosen because it helped to capture broader aspects of the FE as it contains dimensions and specific factors along with a well-established scale (i.e., the

Table 1

Dimensions and Descriptions of the Subscales of the Family Environment Scale and the Diamond Scale of Nonviolence

Variable	Dimension	Component	Description
Family Environment	Relationship (R)	Cohesion	The degree of perceived commitment, support and help family members provide for each other.
		Conflict	Amount of openly expressed anger, aggression and conflict among family members.
		Expressiveness	The degree to which family members are encouraged to express feelings and problems.
	Personal Growth (PG)	Achievement Orientation	The extent to which school and work activities are cast as indices of achievement or areas of competition.

		Moral-Religious Emphasis	The extent to which family members emphasize ethical and religious issues and values.
		Independence	The extent to which family members are assertive, make own decisions, and are self-sufficient.
		Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	The extent to which family members show interest in political, social, intellectual, and cultural activities.
		Active-Recreational Orientation	The extent to which family members emphasize participation in social and recreational activities.
	System Maintenance (SM)	Organization	The extent to which the family endorses clear organization and structure in planning family activities and responsibilities.
		Control	The extent to which rules and procedures are followed and enforced by family members.
Nonviolent Behavior	Intrapersonal Nonviolence		Nonviolence that can be experienced within individuals.
	Interpersonal Nonviolence		Nonviolence toward people with whom an individual interacts frequently including the family and friends.
	Societal Nonviolence		Nonviolent behavior directed toward one's community and larger society.
	World nonviolence		Nonviolence on the international stage between nations.

Source: Timko& Moos (1996); Charalampous et al. (2013); Mayton et al. (2011).

Family Environment Scale) for measuring them. One of the family environmental factors that the social climate model addresses is Conflict (see Table 1). Owing to an amalgamation of the traditional patriarchal societal structure, poverty and, high levels of illiteracy, family violence/conflict are everyday realities for women in Ethiopia (Tayechalem, 2009). A review of 15 empirical studies in the Ethiopian context by Agumasie and Bezatu (2015) indicated that more than 60% of women experience domestic violence. This indicates that Ethiopian women experience a higher rate and more intense family violence than many others in the world. Worst of all, Agumasie and Bezatu found that wife beating is seen as an acceptable phenomenon among 80% of women; the wives were of the opinion, "he is my husband and he can kick me" (p. 9). This implies that Ethiopia's progress towards building COP is being challenged because the FE is hampering gender equality and modeling of nonviolent conflict resolution for its members.

Furthermore, in Ethiopia, retaliation appears to be commonplace. Mitiku and Tilahun (2019) studied the violent and nonviolent experiences of Ethiopian university students and found retaliation as one of the sociocultural factors that obstruct the development of NVB. Such FEs and socio-cultural contexts are less likely to enhance NVB of their members. If the current situation of Ethiopian families is allowed to continue, the likelihood of realizing COP in this country will be doubtful. Thus, the findings of this study will help concerned bodies start enhancing nonviolent behaviors (NVBs) by improving the quality of the adolescents' family environments (FEs). Strengthening the capacity of the family to raise nonviolent children can help to reduce conflict, enhance NVB, and eventually contribute to the development of a

culture of peace (COP) and the well-being of people in general and the Ethiopian people in particular.

Objectives of the Study

The present study was conducted in Addis Ababa which has been serving as the capital city and cultural hub of Ethiopia for about 130 years. The general objective was to examine the dynamics of relations between FE and NVB, thereby contributing to the endeavors of building COP. Specifically, the study was intended to:

- assess the fitness of the model relating components FE and NVB (see Figure 1) to the data.
- examine the nature of the relationships (statistical significance, direction, strength proportion of the variance explained) between NVB and components of FE.

Operational Definitions of Constructs

The two major constructs examined in this study were nonviolent behavior (NVB) and family environment (FE). NVB was assessed by items adapted from the Diamond Scale of Nonviolence (DSN) (Mayton et al., 2011). FE was assessed by items adapted from the Real Form of the Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos & Moos, 2009).

Based on the separate frameworks used to conceptualize FE and NVB, as depicted in Table 1, the major variables were presumed to relate to the manner shown in the structural model that guided the present study (see Figure 1). This model is recursive in that all structural relations are depicted using one-sided arrows indicating unidirectional effects. This direction of influence is informed by social learning

theory. Empirical studies guided by social learning theory have amassed evidence of intergenerational transmission of violence indicating that children who observe family violence will become adult perpetrators (Barnish, 2004; Fuhrer &Uslucan, 2009; Tamene, 2016). It is argued in this paper that the same evidence may hold true for intergenerational transmission of nonviolence. Nonviolence may be transmitted from the family to its members as long as the family provides positive FEs. Thus, the analysis was planned in such a way that the arrow points from the components of the FE to NVB.

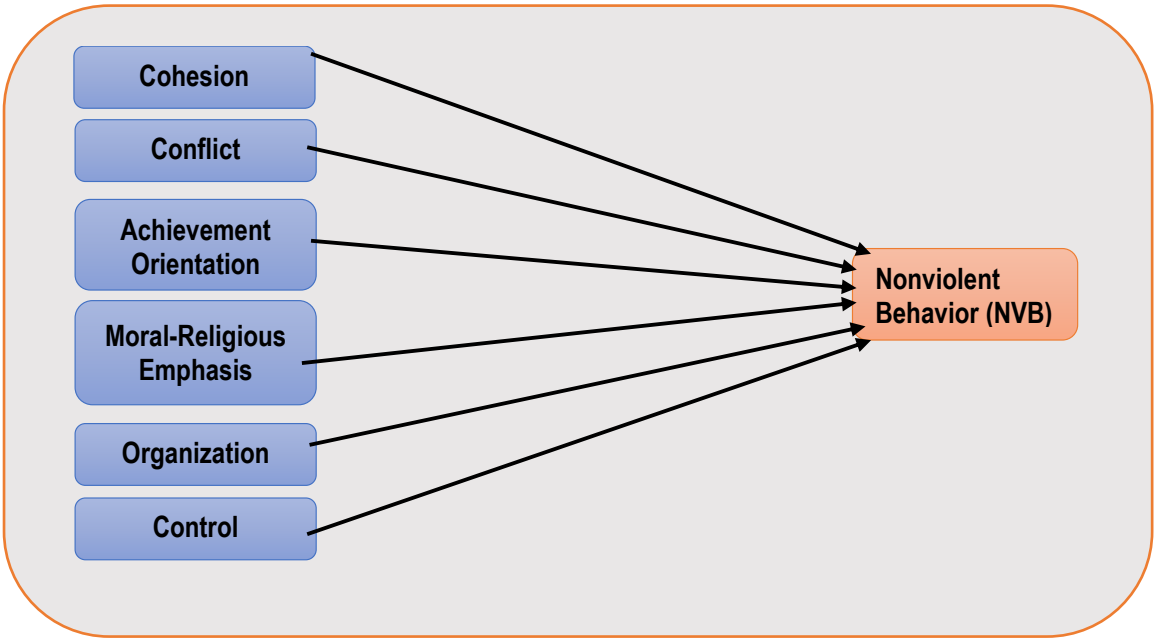

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Author

Methods

The objectives of the present study led to the use of a quantitative research approach. An explanatory correlational design was employed (Creswell, 2012) because the major intention was to examine the amount of covariation among the variables using correlational statistics.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

This study was conducted in one randomly selected government school in the Bole Subscity of Addis Ababa City (─Beshale Secondary School). After realizing that the study would not harm the instructional time and the students in any way, the school administrators allowed the researcher to collect the data. At the time of data collection, there were 893 (Male = 338, Female = 555; Grade 11 = 488, Grade 12 =405) regular students in this school. Thus, 893 was considered the accessible population of the study. Because it was intended to use Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the fitness of the model to the data and the minimum suggested sample size for this purpose is >200 (Kline, 2016), the sample size was determined to be 250. Nonetheless, anticipating that some responses may be incomplete and inappropriate and, therefore, would be discarded, 30 more participants were added to increase the sample size to 280. In order to select participants in accordance with this sample size, a proportionate stratified random sampling method (sex and grade level as stratum) was used. In order to decide the number of participants that was to be selected from

each stratum, the following formula for proportional stratified sampling was used (Brown, 2007).

$$K_s = n\left(\frac{Ns}{N}\right)$$

Where K_s = Number of sample participants selected from stratum S; n = sample size; Ns = Number of participants in stratum S; N = Overall population size. This formula allocates sample sizes according to the number of participants in a stratum.

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of the study participants. Although all of the participants (280) were present, able and willing to participate in the study and therefore filled in and returned the questionnaire (response rate = 100%), data screening indicated that 6 of them did not fill in the questionnaire appropriately (e.g., some acquiescence response sets and zigzag response patterns were observed). These 6 participants (4 females, 2 males, 3 from Grade 11, and 3 from Grade 12) were dropped. As a result, a total of 274 participants remained in the analysis (see Table 2). To identify the actual participants relative to their numbers in sex and grade strata, serial numbers were assigned to their name list obtained from the school records. Then, a random number generator was requested to generate a random list of numbers of the predetermined size for each stratum. Because the numbers generated corresponded with the names of the students on the name list, the participants were identified readily.

Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of participants who remained in the analyses. The majority of the fathers or male guardians (n=134, 48.91%) and

mothers or female guardians (n =139, 50.73%) of the respondents had completed general education (Grades 1-12).

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants (n = 274)

Variable		**N**	**%**
Sex	Male	104	37.96
	Female	170	62.04
Grade	11	150	54.74
	12	124	45.26
Duration of Living in the Family	From Birth Date	173	63.10
	From 10-15 Year	20	7.30
	From 6-9 Years	18	6.60
	From 2-5 Years	44	16.10
	From 5-12 Months	7	2.60
	Less than 5 months	12	4.40
Family Structure: With whom were they living?	Father and Mother (Nuclear Family)	136	49.60
	Only Mother (Single Parent Family)	43	15.70
	Blended or Extended Family	65	23.8
	Relatives (Uncle or Aunt)	30	10.90

The participants were living in family sizes that ranged from two to 12 members (Mean = 5.2; SD = 1.87). The age of the participants ranged from 16 to 26 years (Mean = 17.91; SD = 1.18).

Data Gathering Instruments

A questionnaire consisting of two scales (Family Environment Scale, FES, and Diamond Scale of Nonviolence, DSN) and demographic items was administered in a paper form. The scales were adapted from previously developed instruments. FES was used for assessing a family's social functioning as perceived by the adolescents. The original version of the scale has 90 items in 10 subscales and three dimensions (Moos & Moos, 2009; Saucier et al., 2007). In this study, 30 items in six subscales: conflict, cohesion, moral-religious emphasis, achievement orientation, control, and organization were used. Since multipoint response options yield more reliable scores than the original dichotomous response options of the FES (Greene & Plank, 1994; Moos, 1990), a four-point scale that ranges from *definitely true for my family* (4) to *definitely not true for my family* (1) was used.

The DSN was used to measure the nonviolent behavioral tendency of the adolescents. Developed by Mayton et al. (2011), the DSN assesses the four dimensions of the DMN: intrapersonal, interpersonal, societal, and world nonviolence. The response categories of the DSN range from *definitely true for me* (4) to *definitely not true for me* (1). The present study adapted 30 items of the three subscales: *intrapersonal* (e.g., I am at peace with myself), *interpersonal* (e.g., when someone is rude to me, I am rude back; reverse coded), and *societal* (e.g., I have talked to people locally to advocate for positive community action) from a short 40-item Diamond Scale of Nonviolence (DSN40) (Mayton et al., 2014). The *world nonviolence subscale* was excluded because, unlike in the Western contexts in which it was developed, the intended participants in this study had no exposure in exhibiting NVB regarding international issues. Thus, the combination of items from

intrapersonal (6 items), *interpersonal (6 items)* and *societal* (5 items) subscales were used to represent NVB in the present study.

Mitiku (2023) adapted the 90 items of FES to secondary school students in Addis Ababa City and found promising results. Nonetheless, because the quality of the FES items should be examined further and the present study used only 30 of the 90 items, FES items were presented for content and context relevance analyses along with that of the DSN. Content validity and context relevance were examined by a panel consisting of 12 experts from the School of Psychology, Addis Ababa University. The content validity ratio (CVR) of the items was determined statistically using Lawshe's formula and procedures (Ayre & Scally, 2014). Lawshe's formula for computing the CVR is given as:

$$\mathrm{CVR} = \frac{(\mathrm{ne}) - ({}^{\mathrm{N}}/_{2})}{{}^{\mathrm{N}}/_{2}}$$

where ne = number of experts rating an item essential and N = total number of experts.

The instructors were provided with a scale that ranged from not necessary (1), useful, but not essential (2) to essential (3). Items that were rated as *essential* were regarded as the most relevant and, therefore, that best serve the intended purpose. The value of CVR ranges between -1.00 and +1.00. A CVR of zero indicates that 50% of the panelists rated the item *essential*. While positive values of CVR that exceed the critical values corresponding to the number of panelists were considered to support the content validity of an item, negative CVR values caution that the item should either be removed or refined. In the present study, a total of 60 scaled items (30 FES items and 30 DSN items) were presented for the analysis. For 12 experts, a one-tailed

critical value of CVR at .05 is .475 (Ayre & Scally, 2014). Thus, the hypotheses that at least 9 out of the12 experts rate each item as *essential* (3) ($CVR_9 > CVR_{.475}$) were tested for each of the items. Most of the items (i.e., all of the FES items and 19 of the DSN, about 81.67% of the 60 items) had a CVR of greater than .475, supporting the hypotheses. This implies that 49 of the 60 items were judged by at least 9 of the experts to be relevant both to the content domain they assess and to the Ethiopian adolescents pursuing their secondary schools in Addis Ababa City as research participants. Eleven of the DSN items which could not pass this test were refined more.

Then, the questionnaire was translated to the working language of Ethiopia (i.e., Amharic) by following procedures of backward translation (Hambleton, 2005). Initially, the questionnaire was adapted to the English language. Then, the questionnaire was translated into Amharic by a bilingual (English and Amharic) language expert. Upon completion, another bilingual (English and Amharic) language expert back-translated the Amharic version into English. Moreover, the equivalence of both versions was checked by other professionals. These professionals indicated that most of the Amharic version items were good representations of their corresponding English versions. However, depending on their suggestions, some Amharic items were modified in such a way that they represent their English versions more accurately. Reliability analysis using Cronbach Alpha produced the optimum number of items per subscale with the highest possible reliability coefficients (see Table 3).

The commonly used lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is .70. However, Cronbach's alpha doesn't always provide the best index of reliability of a tool (Saris

& Gallhofer, 2014). Indeed, according to Hair et al. (2010), Cronbach's alpha tends to understate reliability in spite of the fact that it is commonly used in the empirical literature. Besides, Cronbach's alpha does not use factor loadings to estimate reliability and it is not a very good indicator of whether a set of

Table 3

Reliabilities (Cronbach Alpha, α; Index of Quality, IoQ) of the Subscales of the Family Environment Scale (FES) and Diamond Scale of Nonviolence (DSN) in the Present Study (n=274)

Scale	Subscale	Current Study		
		K*	α	IoQ
FES	Cohesion	5	.78	.80
	Conflict	3	.52	.73
	Achievement Orientation	3	.45	.72
	Moral-Religious Emphasis	3	.28	.64
	Organization	2	.50	.77
	Control	3	.59	.76
DSN		17	.75	.71

** K = number of items*

items measures a single factor (Kline, 2016). The other limitation of Cronbach's alpha is that reliability varies dramatically with varying number of items (particularly for more than 10 items). Thus, in the present study, following the suggestion of Hoekstra et al. (2018) to report more alternative measures of reliability besides Cronbach's alpha, a reliability measure derived from factor loadings, index of quality (IoQ) (Saris & Gallhofer, 2014; Schwartz, et. al., 2012), was used for further examination of the reliability. It is evident from Table 3 that for most of the subscales, IoQ produced acceptable reliability coefficients (greater than .70) than did Cronbach's alpha. This indicates that the lower Cronbach's alphas of the subscales were not only due to the

problems inherent in the items but also because of the approach used for estimating the reliabilities.

Data Analysis Techniques

Correlation and structural equation modeling (SEM) were employed to analyze the data. In order to examine assumptions of normality and linearity, graphical and scatterplot methods (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013) were employed. Generally, these assumptions were found to be tenable. For the multivariate data analysis technique (i.e., SEM), the assumption of linearity was found to be tenable, and Mahalanobis d-squared did not reveal troublesome outliers; the result for the normalized approximations of multivariate kurtosis was found to be 5.145, a value that did not much surpass the critical value (i.e., 5), indicating that the data is approximately multivariate normal (Byrne, 2010). The analyses were carried out using version 23.0 of Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Correlational analysis was used to examine zero-order relationships between NVB and components of FE. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for this purpose. SEM was used to test the fitness of the structural model (Figure 1) and to examine the contributions of components of FE to NVB. Criteria for establishing a model's fit is an ardently controversial topic in the SEM literature. In keeping with recommendations by Hair et al. (2010), multiple fit indices were reported as evidence of goodness-of-fit for the model tested in the present study. Accordingly, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI),

Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), Browne-Cudeck Criterion (BCC), Bayes Information Criterion (BIC), Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) and Hoelter's Critical N were used to investigate the fitness of models in the present study (Blunch, 2013; Byrne, 2010).

Results

Fitness of the model to the data

The first objective of the present study was to assess the fitness of the model that guided the study (see Figure 1). Examining the fitness of the model before analyzing the relations between nonviolent behavior (NVB) and components of family environment (FE) was mandatory. This is because unless the fitness of the model to the data is adequate, the structural relations will not be reasonable (Byrne, 2010). Thus, the structural model depicted in Figure 1 was tested. The output model from AMOS is depicted in Figure 2. This model was found to fit the data well [$\chi 2$ (12) = 21.79, p = .04; GFI = .983; IFI = .970; CFI = .968; RMSEA = .055 (90% CI = (.012, .091), PCLOSE = .374)]. The recommended cutoff criteria of for a good fitting model is: for RMSEA less than 0.06 to 0.08 with confidence interval; for IFI, GFI and CFI, values close to .90 or .95 are considered as acceptable level of fitness (Schumacher & Lomax, 2010). AIC, BCC, BIC, CAIC, and ECVI for this model were also adequate, as their values were the smallest compared to the saturated and independent models. Similarly, Hoelter's Critical Ns at both alpha levels: .05 (N = 264) and .01 (N = 329) were good as they were greater than 200. Thus, this study found the fitness of the model was adequate.to the data.

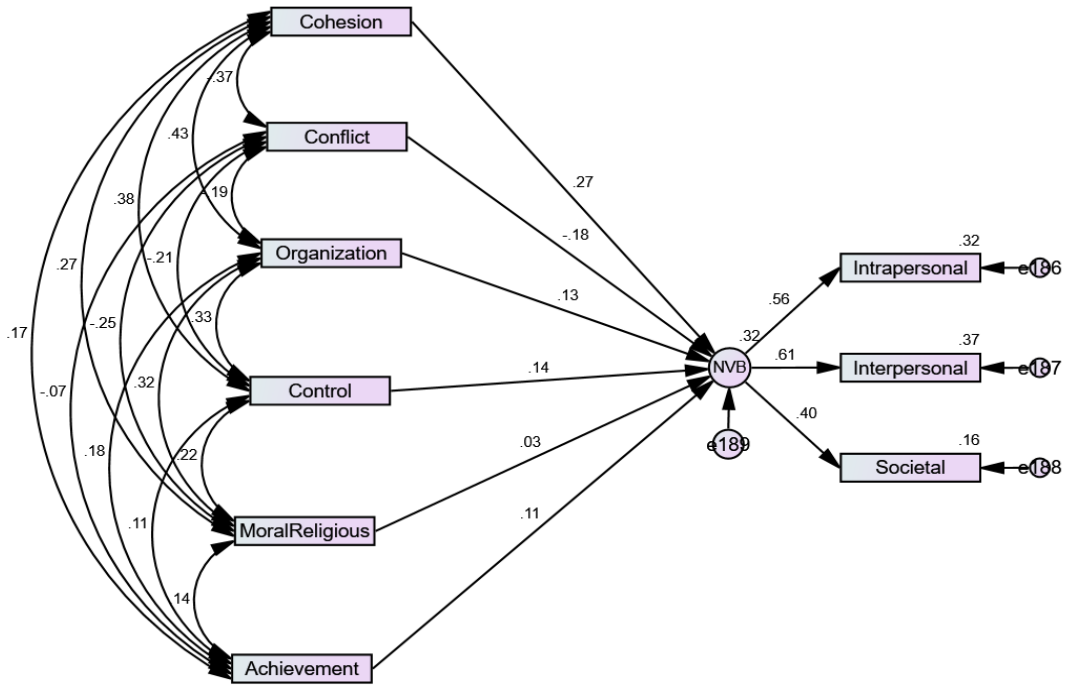

Figure 2

A Structural Equation Model Output

Contributions of Components of FE to NVB

The second objective of the present study was examining relations between NVB and components of FE. As can be observed from Table 4, five of the six correlations were

found to be statistically significant at least at α = .01 level. The correlation coefficients ranged from r = .109 to .296. It was also found that all of the components of the FE except *conflict* were related positively to NVB.

Table 4

Correlations Between Nonviolent Behavior (NVB) and Components of Family Environment (n =274)

	Cohesion	Conflict	Control	Organization	Moral Religious Emphasis	Achievement Orientation
NVB	.296***	-.258***	.220***	.206**	.180**	.109

**p < .01; ***p < .001.

Variances explained by components of FE in NVB were also inspected using squared multiple correlations from AMOS output (i.e., R^2). As Table 5 shows, of the six components of FE, Cohesion explained the largest independent variance in NVB (R^2 = 20.80%, β = .456, p<.001). In a decreasing order, the independent contributions of the other components of FE to NVB are: Organization (R^2 =10.10%, β = .317, p<.001), Control (R^2 = 9.60%, β = .310, p<.01), Conflict (R^2 = 9.0%, β = -.300, p<.01), Moral-religious Emphasis (R^2 = 3.60%, β = .189, p<.05) and Achievement Orientation (R^2 = 1.90%, β = .139, p>.05).

From pairwise contributions of the components of FE, Cohesion, and Conflict (i.e., the relationship dimension) explained the largest variance (R^2 = 23.90%), followed by Organization and Control (i.e., the System Maintenance Dimension) (R^2 = 17.10%) and Achievement Orientation and Moral-religious Emphasis (i.e., personal growth dimension) (R^2 = 6.10%). Together, the six components of FE explained 31.80% of the variance in NVB. Compared to the other pairwise contributions,

Cohesion, and Conflict components contributed about 75% (i.e., .239/.318 = .75) to the variance explained in NVB (see Table 5).

Table 5

Contributions of Components of Family Environment to Nonviolent Behavior (n=274)

Components	**R^2**	**Standardized Structural Coefficient (β)**
Cohesion	.208	.456***
Conflict	.090	-.300**
Cohesion and Conflict	.239	.375***; -.205*
Organization	.101	.317***
Control	.096	. 310**
Organization and Control	.171	.252**; .255**
Achievement Orientation	.019	.139
Moral-Religious Emphasis	.036	.189*
Achievement Orientation and Moral-Religious Emphasis	.061	.139; .186*
Cohesion, Conflict, Achievement Orientation, Moral-Religious Emphasis, Organization and Control	.318	.268**; -.182*; .113; .035; .129; .143

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

These results indicate that the SEM models composed of separate and pairwise components of FE were statistically significant. According to Cohen's (1988) classification of the effect size of R^2 (i.e., $f^2 = R^2/1\text{-}R^2$, where for $f^2 = .02$ represents a

small effect, f^2 =.15 a medium effect, and f^2 =.35 a large effect), Cohesion (effect size = .26), Cohesion and Conflict (effect size = .31), Organization and Control (effect size = .21) explained variances of medium effect in NVB. Moreover, the contribution of the combination of the six components to NVB (effect size = .47) was found to be large. From the independent contributions of components of FE, Cohesion explained NVB very strongly (β = .456, $p<.001$; see Table 5). This means when Cohesion increases by one standard deviation unit, NVB increases by .456 standard deviation unit and vice versa. The conflict had the opposite influence in such a way that one standard deviation unit increment in Conflict is accompanied by a .300 decrement in NVB and vice versa.

Discussion

This study was intended to examine the role of adolescents' family environment (FE) in their nonviolent behavior (NVB). Accordingly, as its first objective, the present study examined the relation between components of FE and NVB by developing and testing a structural model of these variables. The fitness of the model to the data indicates that the model can be used to elucidate the link between FE and NVB. This finding further implies that the FE matters because the "beta press" is at work (Walsh, 2003); that is, adolescents' FEs are influencing their NVB.

The theoretical contributions of this model to the field of peace psychology appear to be manifold. Even though the most recently developed model of nonviolence that was used in the present study as a theoretical framework, the Diamond Model of Nonviolence (DMN), appears to be comprehensive in the sense

that it addresses the dynamics among different levels of nonviolence, it does not pinpoint factors that augment or obstruct NVB. The present study attempted to overcome this limitation by developing and testing a model that addresses the relations between FE and NVB. The major concerns of peace psychology are peacebuilding and peacemaking thereby reducing structural and direct violence (Christie et al., 2001). While peacemaking involves reducing the intensity and frequency of direct or physical violence such as war, rape, and homicide (i.e., achieving negative peace which focuses on reacting to violence after it occurs), peacebuilding is concerned with the promotion of social justice (i.e., achieving positive peace which focuses on preventing structural violence). Peacebuilding does not occur overnight. As the term *building* in peacebuilding implies (and as any physical building which must endure), peacebuilding requires a strong foundation. As argued in the background part of this article, the foundation for peacebuilding, the starting place for developing nonviolent individuals, is the family (Azar et al. 2009).

The inclusion of FE in the present study and the phrase *Beginning from the Very Beginning* in the title of this article implies this gradual process of peacebuilding by augmenting the development of nonviolent individuals within a family, which may eventually contribute to developing a nonviolent community, then nonviolent society and then realizing COP. One of the distinguishing features of a COP is that families in such a culture transmit strategies of nonviolence to the next generation by raising nonviolent children (Bonta, 1996). Hence, peacebuilding starts from the foundation of a social strata□the family. Building or constructing is at the heart of engineering. Thus, by borrowing the term *engineering* from the fields of applied natural science,

the researcher labeled the model that guided the present study as the *Peace Engineering Model (PEM*). Unlike the usual meaning of the term in the applied natural sciences, however, *engineering* here is intended to denote what Rogers (2003, p.31) referred to as "humaneering"□that is, the task of social psychology (and therefore that of peace psychology) that involves understanding human nature and using this understanding to make the world a better place through social changes. Although the task of engineering peace may require encompassing myriads of other variables than those included in the PEM in the present study, it was in the sense that any relevant environmental variable like FE and any relevant personal variable may join in an intricate network of effects which eventually augment or inhibit NVB that the label *PEM* was used. Thus, in the PEM, it is assumed that any relevant environmental and personal variables have a place to fit in; however, the efficacy of the added variable and the resulting model should always be subjected to empirical scrutiny. It was also thought that such nomenclature may ease the task of referring to the model in future studies.

As regards its second objective, the present study examined relations between NVB and components of FE. The study found statistically significant and positive relations between NVB and Cohesion, Organization, Control and Moral-Religious Emphasis indicating that as quality of FE increases, NVB also increases and vice versa. On the other hand, the relation between FE and Conflict was found to be significant and negative. This implies that as quality of FE decreases (i.e., as level of conflict in a family increases), NVB decreases andvice versa.

Generally, these findings are consistent with the empirical literature. For instance, Azar et al. (2009) contend that for an individual, living in a family can

produce both positive and negative experiences. Wolfe and Korsch (1994) found that, compared to children coming from nonviolent families, behavioral problems were more prevalent among those coming from families characterized by domestic violence. Other studies (e.g., Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989) have identified violent childhood FEs as risk factors for social interactional problems, delinquency, and even for perpetrating violence as adults. Likewise, studies conducted on adolescents report similar patterns of relationships between FE and behavioral problems, which led some researchers to assert that when other ecological factors are examined, an aspect of family relationships (parenting) remains a salient factor in explaining the development and progression of adolescent aggression (Murray et al., 2013).

Moreover, a longitudinal study conducted by Henry et al. (2001) showed that compared to youth from families with low-quality social relationships, the likelihood of associating with violent peers and engaging in delinquent behaviors was less for youth from families with high cohesion. A study by Avci and Güçra (2010) also found that conflicts, problems related to behavioral control, and general functioning were characteristics of violent adolescents' families. By the same token, using a longitudinal study design and SEM, Garthe et al. (2015) found in a school setting that adolescents who perceived that their parents supported violent responses were more likely to engage in aggression. Moreover, one category of aggressive behavior that affects the social and emotional functioning of adolescents, bullying, has frequently been related to FE. For instance, Eşkisua (2014) found that the more families have a deficiency in such roles as problem-solving and communication, the more adolescents coming from these families bullied or were bullied. Similarly, Bowers et al. (1992) pointed out that the absence of a biological father at home and lower overall family

cohesion scores were the characteristics of most of the students involved in school bullying. Likewise, in a study conducted on Ethiopian adults in intimate relationships (Tamene, 2016), adverse childhood exposure was found to predict physical and psychological violence perpetration significantly.

The present study also examined the contributions of components of the FE to NVB. The results indicate that the SEM models composed of separate and pairwise components of FE were statistically significant. According to Cohen's (1988) classification of the effect size of R^2, the combination of the six components of FE to NVB (i.e., 31.80%) is considered as large. This implies that FE accounts for a remarkable variation in NVB. Of the six components of the FE, Cohesion and Conflict's contributions were outstanding. Indeed, when the effects of the other components were statistically controlled, regression coefficients of only cohesion and conflict reached statistical significance (see Table 5). Nonetheless, this does not mean that the other components do not contribute to NVB; rather, it means Cohesion and Conflict play the most salient roles in NVB compared to the other components of FE.

As far as the writer of this article is aware, although no study examined the contributions of FE to NVB using the same tools as in the present study, the results of this study are generally consistent with the results of studies that link families and behavioral problems. One such a study was conducted on Ethiopian adolescents by Adunga (2005). Adunga found a statistically significant difference in aggression with respect to authoritative and nonauthoritative (i.e., neglectful, authoritarian, and indulgent) parenting styles in such a way that adolescents from authoritative families (i.e., positive FE) exhibited less aggression. Assuming that a more nonviolent tendency suggests a less aggressive tendency, the result of the present study that

positive FE substantially contributes to NVB appears to be in consonance with Adunga's finding that adolescents from authoritative families were less aggressive. Likewise, it appears that, in line with Adunga's finding, nonauthoritative families contribute more to aggression, which may obstruct NVB. In a similar manner, Tamene (2016) reported that the adverse childhood experiences that participants in his study had at home explained nearly 63% of the variance in psychological violence perpetration and 81% of the variance in physical violence perpetration as adults. Assuming that participants in Tamene's (2016) study who had adverse childhood experiences at home were living in low-quality FEs, it appears that low-quality FEs contribute more to violence than nonviolence. Furthermore, Tamene reported that out of home adverse childhood experiences explained less variance in psychological violence (37%) and physical violence (48%) perpetrations than adverse childhood experiences at home. Thus, the present study's results that low-quality FE is related to low levels of NVB is in support of Tamene's findings. Studies conducted outside of Ethiopia (e.g., Avci & Güçra, 2010; Murray et al., 2013; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989; Wolfe & Korsch, 1994), just as the above local studies, are tangentially related to the results of the present study because they did not address FE and NVB directly. Nonetheless, they all appear to point to the notion that a family can influence its members both positively and negatively (Azar et al., 2009) and that while these positive FEs substantially contribute to NVB, low-quality or negative FEs inhibit NVB by providing fertile ground for the seeds of copious of behavioral problems including aggression and violence.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The present study sought to examine the role of family environment (FE) in nonviolent behavior (NVB). From the findings of this study, the following conclusions and recommendations can be drawn.

First, the structural model linking components of FE and NVB fits the adolescents' data adequately. Thus, the model that guided the present study (see Figure 1) is applicable to explain the relationship between FE and NVB. Second, while Cohesion, Moral-Religious Emphasis, Organization and Control components of FE contribute positively to NVB, Conflict influences NVB negatively. This indicates that whereas positive FE nurtures NVB, a negative FE, that is a conflictual FE, inhibits NVB. Moreover, the six components of FE explained a considerable amount of variance (R^2 =31.80%) in NVB. From these components, Cohesion and Conflict together accounted for about 75% of the variance explained in NVB. This implies that, in general, FE is a crucial factor that may, depending on its quality, enhance or impede adolescents' NVB. The direction and amount of contribution of FE to NVB implies that enhancing the level of NVB requires enhancing the quality of the FE. Particularly, Cohesion and Conflict components of FE, that is, quality of family social interaction needs to be improved because they contributed to NVB more than the other components in the present study.

Thus, parents and other family members should strive to solve conflicts nonviolently so that their children will be exposed to nonviolent experiences early in their lives. Likewise, schools, in collaboration with other concerned bodies such as universities, may take initiatives to identify at risk adolescents for their less nonviolent tendencies, contact parents of the adolescents, assess quality of their FEs

and improve parenting practices and family social interactions so that NVB of the adolescents will be enhanced. Such intervention approaches that start from the family, in addition to programs that help the adolescents resolve conflicts nonviolently, may foster the peacebuilding process thereby increasing the likelihood of realizing COP in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, the results of the present study have policy implications. Recognizing that peace and development are two sides of the same coin, there is a need to coordinate the fragmented peacebuilding efforts in Ethiopia by developing a national peacebuilding policy (United Nations Development Program, 2012). The present study suggests that such a policy may benefit from focusing on adolescents' FEs. Furthermore, the peacebuilding policy may be productive if it emphasizes ways in which parenting education, peace education, and parent-school relationships may boost the adolescents' NVBs.

Limitations and Future Research

Although lower reliability coefficients may be tolerated in studies that employ latent variable models (Kline, 2016) as in the present study, the psychometric qualities of the FE items have become an issue in cross-cultural studies (Mitiku, 2023), the reliability coefficients of some subscales (particularly Achievement Orientation and Moral-Religious Emphasis subscales of the FES) were low. Thus, future researchers should improve the subscale items and explore the associations among variables in the present study with higher scale reliabilities. The model developed and tested in the present study, the Peace Engineering Model (PEM), is also limited in that it addresses only one environmental variable (FE) and no mediator/moderator variable between

FE and NVB. Thus, future researchers are recommended to further test validity of this model. By introducing person-related variables, including values, religious orientation and commitment, and altruism, as mediating variables into the PEM, researchers can test and enhance the explanatory power of the model. Moreover, apart from the role of FE in NVB, the role of other environmental aspects that are delineated by the social climate model, such as educational and correctional institutions and work settings, can be explored. The practical implications of the results from such studies for building COP in Ethiopia will be far-reaching. Moreover, only adolescents in one school participated in the present study. This limits the generalizability of the results. Thus, future studies should extend the present study and test the validity of the PEM in other schools, grade levels, on college and university students, and even among the youth outside of the educational system (e.g., the unemployed and employed youth).

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