The Pillars of Violence and Nonviolence through the Prism of Students' Lived Experiences: A Phenomenological Approach

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Abstract: *This study explores nonviolent behavior experiences of college students using the phenomenological approach. In-depth interview and open-ended written response items were used to gather data from a purposeful sample of seven (five male and two female) students/co-researchers. After transcription, interview and written response data were organized and thematically coded using Open Code software version 4.02. Nineteen subthemes and eight major themes emerged from the data. Other-orientation, self-orientation and transaction between self and others were the subthemes that emerged under the major theme, views of nonviolent behavior. Likewise, violent, nonviolent, and nonviolence out of violent background were found to be the lived experiences of the students/co researchers. Moreover, inner resources, family, media, religion, educational institutions and socio-cultural challenges were found to be the dynamic factors that influence development of nonviolent behavior. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.*

Keywords: *nonviolent behavior, violence, co-researchers, phenomenology, lived experience*

Introduction

> *Outside the home, it was very difficult for me. I grew up in a very violent village. There were lots of bullies. Even though what my mother had told me was in me, I was being taken away by what was taking place in the village. As children, we often saw our elders getting into conflict with each other. We considered such interpersonal conflicts as a badge of honor and signs of bravery; as positive human qualities. As children, we were therefore picking up these behaviors and engaging in constant conflict. We engaged in risky behaviors. I was engaging in lots of violent behavior outside of my village in order to hide these from my mother.*

The above excerpt, taken from a student's/co-researcher's response to one of interview items in the present study, elucidates how violence is inculcated into one's life style beginning early in development. Bandura (1973) was right in pointing out how the culture of violence percolates into the fabric of society through modeling as this excerpt affirms.

This culture of violence has now become a defining feature of our modern social world. However, some writers such as Summy (2009) suggest that violent social intercourse did not always characterize human society. To the contrary, nonviolence appears to have been part of humans' social existence and interaction. Our ancestors lived in small, intimate groups with only the simplest tools to help them adapt for survival (Hamburg & Hamburg, 2004). The origin and rise of social violence seem to be closely related with the emergence of ruling classes following the domestication of nature that occurred in agricultural and pastoral settlements. Summy (2009) argues that this transition to a vertically structured society, sustained by violence in its many forms, occurred mainly through a process of bio-cultural interaction rather than genetic evolution alone.

Today, human ingenuity has produced an unprecedented increase in the destructive power of the human species. It is evident from a glance at

any major news source on the web, television, or print media that our world is a violent place. War in the Middle East and Africa, terrorist bombings, torture, murder, rape, school shootings, and other acts of human aggression are reminders of how much the culture of violence has become widespread (Myers, 2010). Both direct and indirect violence are global problems that knock at the door of developed and developing nations. Inter and intrastate violent conflicts, whether in Africa or elsewhere abound (Abraha, 2012; Muluwork, 2012). The most recent conflicts in Ethiopia's regional state boundaries (e.g., Oromo-Somali conflict) and other seemingly minor conflicts in its different parts that occasionally wax and then wane are, but a localized and concentrated expression of the wide spread human social conflict that needs close scrutiny.

Myriads of factors related to the Ethiopian culture may predispose individuals to act violently. For instance, vengeance is common particularly in rural Ethiopia. When one person kills another, the act is retaliated by the deceased person's family or clan who stringently find and kill the murderer or his/her close relatives. Retaliatory killing and the associated reconciliation ceremony is so rampant that different Ethiopian ethnic groups have a special term for it: *Guma* among the Amahara and the Afar, and *Gumaa* among the Oromo People (Meron, 2011). Likewise, Ethiopia's traditional patriarchal societal structure intertwined with the prevalence of high level of poverty and illiteracy compound the culture of violence. Children and women are not spared from this culture (Tayechalem, 2009). Owing to these situations, it is little wonder that Ethiopia ranked 139th out of 162 countries on the peace index globally (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014).

On the other hand, peace is closely associated with the lives of Ethiopians starting from daily greetings and goodbyes (e.g., In *Amharic[3]*: *Dehina Ider,* in *Afaan Oromo[4]: Nagaan Buli* both of which in English could mean *have a peaceful night.).* Also Ethiopia has various traditional institutions that play remarkable roles in resolving conflicts, countering vengeance and building peace. Exemplars among these are the *Aba Gedas, Merto,*

Weresh and Beaalalti. The peace sticks of *Sinke* of the Oromo and *Siqqo* of the Sidama women are also traditional symbols through which women involve in both peacemaking and peacebuilding (International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, 2009*).* Besides, Ethiopians follow various religions including Christianity and Islam. These traditional institutions and religious practices have rich potentials for converting violence to nonviolence thereby developing nonviolent Ethiopian citizens. Given the current crying need for creating sustainable nonviolent citizens, communities and society in Ethiopia or elsewhere, understanding the intricacies of the development of violent and nonviolent behavior patterns will be a timely endeavor.

Thus, this study explored students'/co-researchers' violent and nonviolent behavioral experiences phenomenologically. The Following research questions guided the inquiry.

1. How do the students view nonviolent behavior?
2. What are the lived experiences of the students regarding violent and nonviolent behaviors?
3. From the students' perspective, what are the dynamics that influence the development of nonviolent behavior?

In the empirical literature, nonviolence or nonviolent behavior is defined as an action that uses power and influence to reach one's goal without direct injury or violence to the person or persons working to thwart one's goal achievement (Mayton, 2009). While literatures on nonviolence (e.g., Johansen, 2007) maintain that nonviolence is more than the absence of violence, they also use nonviolence and peace interchangeably. We use this same line in this paper and use nonviolent behavior and peaceful behavior or peace interchangeably. However, these "outsider" views of nonviolence were not imposed on the participants of the study. Rather, their own conceptualizations, that is, "insider" views of nonviolent behavior were explored.

Methods

Study Site and Design

The study was conducted in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Qualitative research design that emphasized the phenomenological approach was the method of choice for the study. This research approach was preferred over other qualitative research approaches because we thought that it is suitable for exploring the lived experiences of the co-researchers. This choice was determined on the basis of the ideas proposed by Edmund Husserl, the most influential person associated with philosophy of phenomenology. Husserl developed the concept of the life world (*Lebenswelt*) which refers to the everyday experiences that we live and which we reflect upon. Thus, the phenomenological method aims to describe, understand and interpret the meanings of experiences of human life (Patton, 2002; Bloor & Wood, 2006; Adam & Manen, 2008). In phenomenological research designs, along with using relevant data gathering instruments and sampling design, various data analysis strategies are employed. Among these strategies, Hycner's procedures were used in the present study. These procedures include transcription, bracketing and phenomenological reduction, delineating units of meaning relevant to the research questions, eliminating redundancies, clustering units of relevant meaning, determining themes from clusters of meaning, returning to the participant with data summary and themes, and identifying general and unique themes for entire data (Hycner, 1985; Morrissey & Higgs, 2006).

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Co-researchers of this study were second year Addis Ababa University undergraduate Extension School of Psychology students who were attending their classes in the 2014/2015 academic year (summer session). It was preferred to refer to the research participants as *co-researchers* because the participants were considered as experts of their own nonviolent behavior experiences. Owing to their lived experiences, they knew more about their experiences than we did. Moreover, each participant acted as a co-researcher by looking at his/her own interview transcripts and working with us to correct or modify them. In qualitative research, considering research participants as *co-researchers* is applauded because it is an attempt to reduce hierarchical power relationship between the researcher and the participants, thereby recognizing research participants as co-creators of the findings of a study (Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach, 2009). This does not mean, however, that co-researchers are credited as co-authors in the present study.

Purposeful sampling is commonly used in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Thus, stratified purposeful sampling was used in this study. Sex was used as strata (for details of the selection procedures, see data gathering procedures subsection). Patton points out that there is no general rule about the number of participants to include in a qualitative study. Polkinghorne (1989) cited in Creswell (2007) recommended five to 25 participants for phenomenological inquiry. In line with this recommendation, we decided to investigate the lived experiences of a total of seven co-researchers (five male and two female) in the present study. Six of them were Orthodox Christians while one of them was a Muslim. Their age ranged from 23 to 35 years (*Mean* = 27.57 and *standard deviation* = 3.66).

Data Gathering Tools

The major data collection tool of phenomenological research is in-depth interview. In addition to in-depth interviews, life world of the research participants can be explored through diaries, documentary methods, visual methods and open-ended written responses (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Creswell, 2007). Accordingly, data were generated through not only the in-depth interviews, but also through the utilization of the open-ended written response items. These tools were meant to elicit the rich lived experiences of the co-researchers.

The interview protocol had five parts. These were general interview protocol to be followed: purpose of the interview; co-researcher's demographic characteristics; seven interview items related to the research questions; and concluding remarks. Similarly, the open-ended written response items protocol was composed of three parts. These were purpose of the written response items; demographic characteristics; and seven items related to the research questions. In both the interview and written response items, items related to the research questions were the same except their forms. We developed these items based on our own informal observations and some nonviolent behavior literatures (e.g., Masciulli, 2004; Mayton, 2009).The open-ended written response items were used to gather data that were employed to identify information-rich co-researchers for the interview.

Data Gathering Procedures

The written response and in-depth interview items as well as the informed consent form were initially prepared in English and later translated into the official language, Amharic. Orientation about the study was given to the students in a separate room. The total student group was notified about the procedures of the study, the expected duration, their right to decline to participate and to withdraw from the research once participation has begun; the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing and confidentiality of their responses. After the orientation, a total of 16 co-researchers (13 male and 3 female) volunteered to participate in the study. Subsequently, the written response items were distributed to these co-researchers in a room by arranging time in advance with a colleague teaching a course. The written response items were administered before conducting the interview because we wanted to use written responses as the starting point for exploring the co-researchers' lived experiences and then select more information-rich individuals for the interview. At the end, we found that this procedure worked well.

Students who consented to the oral orientation and provided written responses formed a pool of the co-researchers to be interviewed. After preliminary inspection of the written responses (which actually took three days), seven (five male and two female) co-researchers were identified depending on the depth and relevance of their written responses to the phenomenon under study. Other students who consented and provided relatively more relevant and detailed responses served as reserve throughout the study. This was important because it was thought that the reserve would be useful incase additional co-researchers were required. Fortunately, additional co-researchers were not required.

The interview date and time convenient for each co-researcher was scheduled in advance with the co-researcher. The interview was conducted in the office of one of the authors of this article. The written informed consent form was given to each co-researcher in the office before the interview began. The co-researchers were instructed to read the informed consent form thoroughly first and then make their respective decisions to either sign it or refuse to do so. All of them expressed their consent by signing in the form.

All of the interviews and the written response items were conducted by one of the authors. While these processes were underway, the researcher continued to monitor and check on participants' comfort with the situation by way of asking them how he dressed and spoke. These procedures and mannerisms are generally recommended when conducting in-person interview (Clark, 2008). In general, the entire interview took six hours, 54 minutes and 10 seconds (maximum: one hour, 20 minutes and six seconds; minimum: 39 minutes and 35 seconds). Thus, on average, interview with one co-researcher lasted for about 59 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded while notes were concurrently taken during the interview.

Methods of Data Analysis

In qualitative inquiry, there is no clear demarcation of when data gathering ends and when data analysis begins (Patton, 2002). Thus,

although initial data analysis began during written response inspection, interviewing, and transcription by writing memos, formal data analysis did not take place until much later. The detailed data analysis included data recording and data analysis procedures, and a strategy for validating the findings which are briefly described below.

Data recording procedures

Because large amount of information is gathered during the study, organization of data is an indispensable activity in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). In the study, building on the document organizing experience of Groenewald (2004), different files were opened and hard copy documents were reserved. The documents included written response sheets; the informed consent agreement; notes that were taken during the interview; notes that were taken following each interview; notes that were taken during the data analysis and the transcripts. Furthermore, softcopy versions of the files were stored electronically on different computers.

Data analysis procedures

All data in the study were transcribed. Data from the interviews were transcribed by repeatedly listening to the tapes. The interviews were simultaneously translated into English during transcription. The entire transcription took a total of about 36 hours and 40 minutes. That is, it took about five hours and 23 minutes on the average to transcribe each co-researcher's interview.
After transcribing and organizing the data, detailed data analysis began. Following Hycner's (1985) procedures, data were reduced to smaller essential elements. Accurate and efficient reduction of the data required using computer software. Thus, OpenCode version 4.02 (Umea University, 2011) was used. Initially, each transcript in Microsoft Word was saved as *plain text* because this was the only form that the OpenCode software reads. Then, after importing to the OpenCode, the data were explored to obtain their general sense while

memoing in the space provided in this software. When imported to the OpenCode software, the interview transcripts resulted in a total of 1190 lines of which 1176 lines were coded. Initially the transcripts were segmented and coded into a total of 119 distinct co-researcher-based codes. Through inductive process, the data were narrowed to a few themes. In the study, some themes could be expected from the research questions, written response items and semi-structured interview items because they were, although flexible, organized around three core topics. However, the analyses were not restricted to the core topics so that this expectation would not inhibit the emergence of new themes from the data. While many qualitative studies stop at reporting themes, the literature indicates that researchers can add rigor and insight into their study by layering themes or interconnecting them. Thus, the final data analytic activity in the study was layering and inter-relating the themes using a figure (Bloor & Wood, 2006; Ayres, 2008; Creswell, 2012).

A strategy for validating the data

In this study, member checking was employed as a strategy of validating findings (Creswell, 2012). In member checking, co-researchers in the study checked the accuracy of the data they provided. The transcripts were assigned line numbers and taken back to the co-researchers during member checking session. Member checking was conducted by arranging time with the co-researchers in advance. During the member checking session, co-researchers were instructed to read the transcripts thoroughly to check whether their words were actually represented. Also they were told to write any corrections and comments on the space provided for this purpose. Most of the co-researchers commented that the transcripts were actually their own. Some of their written comments include, "It is all what I said, thanks a lot"; "It is the actual representation of my experience"; "It is written the way I said, so it is very good." While no significant changes were made, some co-researchers suggested some corrections and modifications. The modifications

included some reconstructions of the sentences. For example, co-researcher F adjusted lines 24 and 25 of his transcript which stated, "…other individuals which had the responsibility to inquire the refund had added numbers…" to "… the individual who bought the drug added numbers …" Similarly, co-researcher O suggested modifications for line number 119 ("taxi" should be replaced by "personal car") and line number 121 ("passengers" should be replaced by "driver"). It was after securing the co-researchers' confirmations of the transcriptions that we then proceeded to formal data analysis.

Results

Looking for the essence of experience is at the core of phenomenology. Essence is an invariant structure; it is that part of experience common or consistent across the research participants (Johanson & Christensen, 2012). Accordingly, out of a total of 119 distinct co-researcher-based codes, 60 meaningful codes were found to be common for all co-researchers. Thus, the 60 codes were refined (by examining the transcripts and the codes several times) and reduced to 19 subthemes that were commonly described by the co-researchers. These subthemes were further refined (by examining the transcripts, codes and subthemes several times) and finally reduced to eight major themes. Closer inspection of the frequency of the subthemes indicated that a subtheme was mentioned at least by two co-researchers; 15 (78.95%) of the subthemes were described by at least four co-researchers; and two subthemes were mentioned by all of the co-researchers. Since several major themes emerged with respect to dynamics of nonviolent behavior, it was represented as *domain* simply to mean a broad concept that is influenced by interplay of several factors. This domain consisted of six major themes.

Views of Nonviolence

The first question of this study inquired the students' views of nonviolent behavior. Under the major theme of students' views of nonviolent behavior, three subthemes emerged. These were other-orientation, self-orientation and, transaction between self and others.

The *other-orientation* subtheme encompassed the view of nonviolence as caring for and having positive attitudes towards others. As described by co-researcher F, *other* goes beyond human beings to live in harmony with nature in general. In a similar manner, some of the co-researchers viewed nonviolence as thinking and doing good things for others just as one wants in return. This included caring for people with disabilities and the environment in which others live. One of the co-researchers went to the extent of linking nonviolence to conforming to rules and norms that start from the family and extend to the society at large:

> *Nonviolent behavior is related to a society. I found that respect was valued very much, usually respecting elders. Especially, a person is nonviolent if he/she respects his/her parents, brothers and elders. Obeying rules and regulations given by the family is related with nonviolence. In the village where I grew up, there was a prevailing attitude that "elders do not make mistakes." So you need to respect what they say. (Co-researcher D)*

The *self-orientation* subtheme is concerned with nonviolence as living with oneself peacefully. As one co-researcher mentioned, this may make the person look quiet: "My elder brother was a very quiet person. It was said that he was a very nonviolent child. I was urged to be just like him. In our society, a quiet person is a nonviolent person." (Co-researcher D). Co-researchers were also of the view that nonviolence was interpreting things positively and having inner stability:

> *First of all, nonviolent behavior emanates from the self…critically thinking about what you do; even on jobs, exercising one's responsibility appropriately; having a good understanding about external things and a stable inner being; giving a good interpretation to all things. Such people see things positively. When something happens, such people interpret*

it easily. They have inner calmness. (Co-researcher C)

The *transaction between self and others* subtheme represents the concept that nonviolent behavior is the result of the transaction between self and others. The co-researchers viewed respecting others' rights (self) and demanding others to respect one's right (others) as characteristics of a nonviolent person. Co-researcher G noted, "I feel that if others' peace is affected, your peace is also affected." As evident in the following quote, co-researchers with the view of this subtheme might not conform to others' demands readily; nor did they rely entirely on self.

I do not accept the way my family sees nonviolence. They want you to be quite. They want you to say 'Yes' to everything. Even you are not allowed to speak loudly in the family. To me, a nonviolent person is the one who exercises his/her duty and respects the rights of others. The one who maintains the value of the society and makes others respect his/her own rights. Respecting rights and exercising duties is nonviolence. (Co-researcher D)

Lived Experience

This major theme is concerned with the actual circumstances encountered and lived by the co-researchers as long as they remembered. It is related with the second research question of the present study. Three subthemes emerged with respect to this theme: violent and nonviolent experiences, and nonviolence out of violent background.

The *violent experience* subtheme is concerned with engaging in such inappropriate behaviors as aggression, bullying and beating as well as encountering pressures to do so. As the following excerpt illustrates, co-researchers revealed that they were engaging in violent behaviors beginning from their childhood years.

In my family, I have a special name, dememerar. It is to mean aggressive. I am aggressive in my behavior. I usually get into conflict with my friends... I do not like being defeated. Even sticks could not correct me. For example, when I was a fourth grader, one elder boy, a sixth grader, took away the ball we were playing with. The rest of my friends feared the boy and shunned away. But I stoned the boy in his head; he bled. ...Now I can say that I have left 75% of my childhood behavior...But at the moment that I become aggressive, my old behavior emerges readily; I may get into verbal conflict. (Co-researcher D)

Similarly, co-researcher C experienced a strong compulsion from others to engage in violence: "...I have my own reason to shun away from them. Your friends say to you, 'you are not a male!' … there are other people who encourage the violent person saying, "Go, kill."

The *nonviolent experience* subtheme is the opposite of the *violent experience* subtheme. It is avoiding getting into conflict with others as well as engaging in such positive behaviors as tolerance, patience and forgiving other people. Co-researcher O articulated this subtheme vividly as can be seen in the following excerpt:

Surprisingly, in the work place, I do not remember a person with whom I got into conflict. I live with all people in peace. If I think that I have dismayed a person a little bit, I feel uncomfortable. I entered into a promise with myself that I have to live in peace with all; there may be a problem with others, there may also be problems with me, but that I have to tolerate all things.

Co-researcher F mentioned two nonviolence encounters both of which were concerned with forgiving others and maintaining past good relationships after a conflict. Once he conflicted with his fiancée. He remembers the situation like this: "She showed extremely bad behavior that was not tolerable. The place was not the place where she would exhibit such a behavior. I became emotional." However, he was able to make a positive decision: "I reflected on the incidence for

some days. Others also intervened to resolve the issue. Finally, I managed to change my mind and continued with her peacefully." The other time, he was accused falsely. As soon as he realized that the accusation was a fake, he got nervous and narrated his encounter as follows.

> *I was extremely angry and nearly to choke the accountant. But finally, I calmed myself down and did not get into conflict. This is because sometimes you win people by doing good things, not bad ones. I learned that even if my truth is hidden for some time, because there is a time when it will be revealed, being patient is very important.*

The *nonviolence out of violent background* subtheme deals with co-researchers' involvement in nonviolent behaviors contrary to their violent background. It also includes their view that such a shift is possible. Experiencing the death of his lovely father in the hands of other people, it is difficult to expect co-researcher C to be nonviolent. However, contrary to what happened, co-researcher C points:

> *I am attempting to write film script regarding retaliation. I used even my name in the script. I based the whole story on my father's and mother's case. The whole idea of the script is that "the son of the snake is not a snake always; retaliation is not good." If I retaliate today, tomorrow my innocent brother or sister may be killed. This is not good.*

Likewise, co-researcher F was living in a violent area from his childhood. He said, "There were conflicts and quarreling. My village was a village of thieves." However, he indicated that he grew up just contrary to what surrounded him: "I was not attracted to what I was observing."

Dynamics of Nonviolent Behavior

This domain is related to the third research question of the present study. The question inquired the dynamics of factors that influence the development of nonviolent behavior from the students' perspectives. Six major themes emerged as factors that influence development of nonviolent behavior: Inner resources, family, media, religion, educational institutions and socio-cultural challenges.

Inner resources

This major theme centers on the idea that person-related factors influence development of nonviolent behavior. It is composed of two subthemes: self as a starting point and distilling environmental factors.

The *self as a starting point* subtheme focuses on the idea that developing nonviolent behavior should start from the individual. Co-researcher K noted that the individual should be genuinely open to promote nonviolence. She indicated that individuals should practice nonviolent behavior throughout their lives beginning from childhood. This subtheme was also richly expounded by co-researcher I:

> *Developing nonviolent behavior should start from within a person. The person himself/herself should take the lion's share. It is starting from within that the behavior develops gradually. If there is peace within the person, if this inner phenomenon is nurtured and practiced, and if everyone practices this way, we can foster nonviolent behavior.*

The *distilling environmental factors* subtheme refers to personal capacity to select environmental circumstances that lead to nonviolence from those leading to violence and adapt them to one's life style. Co-researcher C pointed out that although the environment instigates him to retaliate, he did not accept this path of violence: "There are books which teach about taking revenge. But you should take only good ideas." He was of the opinion that, "Even if a chain-smoker teacher teaches you that smoking is bad, you should take the ideas, not his/her behavior. You should be selective." Similarly,

other co-researchers mentioned that they distill only good ideas from what they encounter: "What we take from the media such as films depends on our selecting capacity. All films may not show us good things. I learn lots of things from films." Co-researcher I; "I do not accept things as they come from religious persons. You should turn back and see what the great book says." Co-researcher O.

Family.

This major theme deals with the role of the family in developing nonviolent behavior. In addition to parents, family here refers to grandparents, brothers, sisters or uncles with which the individual lived. The family theme consisted of three subthemes: family cohesion, family members as models, and mothers as mothers of nonviolence.

The *family cohesion* subtheme refers to close relationship among family members. This relationship is indicated by the time that the family spends together. As mentioned by co-researcher K, family cohesion provides an indispensable opportunity for family members to share their ideas to their children. However, co-researcher C stated that this potentially beneficial family cohesion is being weakened currently: "But where do you find your family? These days, schools and media have much influence. The family just throws children to schools. Currently, the influence of the family is not so much." To alleviate this deterioration in family cohesion, co-researcher D had to say the following.

> *My messages to Ethiopian families: Abolish individualism….Within the family, nobody cares for his/her brother. For example, I get to our home, I eat my lunch, I sleep and then I go out. There is no discussion. No one asks what is happening to a brother. Let the family take time for discussing together. Let them be integrated. Let fathers and mothers, leaders of the family, create conducive discussion environment. Because the family members are genetically related, what they discuss together is from within. They evaluate one another. Let there be equality.*

> *Especially, let the mother treat children in an unbiased manner. Let the father also be fair to the children.*

The *family members as models* subtheme refers to the concept that family members should be good role models of nonviolent behavior for their children and one another. Co-researchers pointed out that they had nonviolent behavior models in their family. In the quote that follows, co-researcher K indicated that being good models by doing practical things is more productive in developing nonviolent behavior in children than merely telling them.

In order to develop nonviolent behavior, I think that doing, not telling, is important. If you tell your son to be a clever student, and do not like education for yourself and your son observes you burning exercise books, you will not be successful. Thus, any parents should show good things to their children practically. If any parent wants to help develop a nonviolent child, s/he should be a nonviolent person.

The *mothers as mothers of nonviolence* subtheme refers to the outstanding role of mothers in developing nonviolent behavior. Although they play important roles along with other family members, data from the co-researchers indicated that the mothering of nonviolence emerged as a separate subtheme. Co-researchers indicated that they learned nonviolent behavior by observing their mothers' behaviors. Co-researcher C, whose father passed away due to malicious acts of people, illustrated how his mother was preventing the rest of the family from retaliation:

> *Our mother intentionally diverted our attention from the bad reason of our father's death…by saying, "he died just due to certain diseases." We were asking her techniques of retaliation. She used to say, "No, this is not the case. Now you should learn. I expect lots of things from you. This country expects lots of things from you." She intentionally gave us wrong information about our father's death. Now, I think our mother was correct in doing this. Otherwise,*

we would have retaliated and found ourselves in problems.

Media

The major theme media refers to the role that the media play in facilitating and hampering development of nonviolent behavior. The theme is composed of two subthemes: media as facilitator and media as obstacle.

The *media as facilitator* subtheme refers to the positive contribution of media to the development of nonviolent behavior. Co-researcher I pointed out the influence of media on nonviolent behavior: "People with good manners may share their experiences on media. Awareness about the detrimental effects of violence can also be created using media." Similarly, one co-researcher illustrated the potential uses of media:

> *There are several social media, tutor and internet. Today there is no child without mobile phone. I am sure that children in KG have their own cell phones. Last time I went to a field to collect data. I found children operating latest cell phones that even I myself hadn't had. As psychologists, we can change many behaviors if we open and effectively use psychology websites. (Co-researcher C)*

The *media as obstacle* subtheme refers to the debilitating effect of media in developing nonviolent behavior. No matter how abundant media are, co-researcher D indicated that there are very few media which help people develop positive thinking. Likewise, co-researcher O illustrated that the media he encountered triggered violence:

> *From the films that I was watching in my childhood, I do not think that I learned nonviolent behavior. What I always was watching in cinemas were beating, war, finishing each other, something like that. If it is not a karate film, it will not be interesting to you. When we go out, we want to be what we saw. To some extent, Indian films focus more on tragedy, you may not find lots of*

> *bullying. You may learn something; you may get something human from them. In action films, you simply watch people beating and killing one another. Hundred people may be killed in one film. You simply watch ruthlessness.*

Religion

This theme refers to the facilitating and debilitating role that religion can play in developing nonviolent behavior. It has two subthemes: religion as facilitator and religion as obstacle.

The *religion as facilitator* subtheme refers to the positive contribution of religion to developing nonviolent behavior. The co-researchers expounded that religion teaches several good things which in turn foster nonviolence. Co-researcher F mentioned that some individuals may commit violent actions as a result of not believing the existence of a creator who observes when they carry out the actions. Similarly, Co-researcher O pointed out that fearing the creator is a buffer against engaging in violence:

> *I attended Sunday school during my childhood. There may be some religious narrations and story that you hear. There are messages transmitted by preachers. In all religion institutions, usually, positive things, things about goodness, about helping others are preached. It contributes. You know, fearing the creator. When you want to do something deviant, you fear the creator, and you think of him. In all things, you do not just engage in doing something. You place the creator above, you fear him for the thing you do.*

The *religion as obstacle* subtheme refers to the debilitating effect of religion in developing nonviolent behavior. Co-researcher G said that not all religious people are good. Likewise, co-researcher F illustrated that religious people can engage in violence: "I read from an Ethiopian history book written by Zewudie Retta that one

religious pope blessed and sent Italy's missiles which were used to fight Ethiopians." The co-researcher went on mentioning the link between religion and violence and said, "A person cannot be a true religious person just because he/she pretends in clothing, wearing a cap, carrying cross and other religion materials. A true religious person cannot be violent." According to co-researcher O, even preachers sometimes preach things that instigate violence:

> *...sometimes, you may hear inappropriate things being preached. Denigrating other religions. They may be aggressive when they deal with issues related to religions outside of your religion. If you accept this, when you go out, you cannot have proper respect for followers of other religions. A very religious person can engage in physical fight with followers of the other religion; he can engage in insulting.*

Educational institutions

This theme refers to the role of educational institutions in fostering nonviolent behavior. It also includes the challenges related to educational institutions that may negatively impact development of nonviolent behavior. The theme consists of two subthemes: school and university.

The *school* subtheme refers to school-related roles and challenges that influence development of nonviolent behavior. Co-researcher F mentioned that he learned more nonviolent behaviors from his elementary and high schools: "In particular, we were expected to respect time, to follow rules and to wear uniforms. There were many teachers with good manners from whom I learned nonviolence." Other co-researchers pointed out specific courses which help in developing nonviolent students: "In schools, courses like Civics and Ethical Education may help. They may help you develop what you got from your family. Good teachers can also contribute a lot." Co-researcher K. While other co-researchers focused on the positive side of school for facilitating nonviolence, co-researcher O elucidated school related challenges that may hamper development of nonviolent behavior:

> *Fostering nonviolent behavior should start from elementary school level. Now when I learn psychology courses, I sometimes contemplate about my past. Had my elementary or KG class teachers had the things I got now, how would they have molded the students? And, I think lots of things should be done in lower grades. Particularly, up to fifth grade, lots of things should be done. Teachers, especially, first [laughing], teachers themselves should take these courses; these things as how to handle a child; how to teach a child; its psychological effect; what spanking and rebuking bring about. ... They [lower-grade teachers] believe in punishment, being aggressive, beating. Recently there is some improvement in some KGs, but ... Teacher-student relationship does not encourage you to speak. You fear your teacher. In front of the teacher whom you fear, how do your freely express your ideas?*

The *university* subtheme refers to university-related roles and challenges that influence development of nonviolent behavior. Some of the co-researchers indicated that services related to office of the registrar and teaching learning process did not encourage nonviolent behavior. Co-researcher O encountered instructors exhibiting inappropriate behaviors: "In university too, you sometimes observe some deviant and violent behaviors with some teachers…you observe them speaking negative things, dismaying others..." In the same manner, Co-researcher G explicated the problems he had been encountering in main and associate registrars beginning from his application for entry to the university. He also elucidated what he experienced with some instructors:

> *There are also some problems with some instructors. Many of them are good. You find erudite instructors having good manners; knowledgeable but no good manners; you find things that differ according to our nature. But, some of them, to some extent, cross the boundary…*

Socio-cultural challenges

This theme refers to social and culture-related factors that hamper the development of nonviolent behavior. It is composed of two subthemes: mistrusting as obstacle and culture as obstacle.

The subtheme of *mistrusting as obstacle* is concerned with being suspicious of all people due to some prior problems with some people. Co-researcher G mentioned that trusting one another is one indicator of nonviolent behavior. However, there are circumstances in which people distrust one another which in turn weaken the likelihood of acting positively towards one another. Similarly, co-researcher G indicated that trusting is being vanished; people are becoming more and more suspicious of one another which in turn hampers development of nonviolent behavior. For instance, after the death of his father due to human-made malicious acts, co-researcher C failed to trust others. He said:

> But what I learned from my father's death is not to trust people. For example, I am married now. But I do not eat or drink anything from my mother-in-law's home. I fear. My father died in the hand of a person whom he trusted. Even we do not know the reason of our mother's death. I have a friend who comes to my home and eats what we serve him. I cry when I see him eating what I give him trusting me.

The subtheme of *culture as obstacle* refers to culture-related factors that hamper the development of nonviolent behavior. Co-researcher C indicated that sometimes the society narrates unnecessary ideas which can lead an individual to violence. After experiencing death of his father due to malevolent human acts, he encountered strong social pressure to retaliate. Correspondingly, co-researcher G mentioned that Ethiopian culture encourages revenge which is rival of nonviolence:

> It is said that as society, "an Ethiopian is revengeful." To me, this too is an obstacle to developing nonviolent behavior. He retaliates. It is said that he waits for time. Sometimes, when you think that he has forgotten, he did not forget. I myself encountered this. You find someone saying, "You said this and that." When I say, "I said that thing because of this. Do you keep that thing until today?" He may tell you, "I was dismayed at that time." Even this happens because some individuals are free to express their feelings. Others just frown their faces to you. You ask him," What happened to you?" and then sometimes make him vent that thing.

Discussion

Views of Nonviolent Behavior

As presented in the preceding section, the data indicated three views of nonviolence: *other-orientation*, *self-orientation*, and *transaction between self and others*. The emergence of *other-oriented* subtheme is expected owing to the socio-cultural traditions of Ethiopia. Ethiopia has a rich culture and strong social values. Ritual ceremonies related to birth, wedding and death, principles of mutual cooperation and communal concerns indicate that social values are entrenched in the culture (Sisay, 2007). Thus, a person who conforms to social and cultural expectations may be regarded as nonviolent while the one who deviates from the norms is considered to be violent.

The *self-orientation* subtheme is concerned with nonviolence as living with oneself peacefully. Inner stability, inner calmness and inner peace are the outstanding features of this subtheme. Even though empirical studies do not seem to focus on people's conceptualizations of inner peace, some findings relate the concept to characteristics of a peaceful person. Inner peace is considered to be a precursor to nonviolent action and that there can never be peace between nations until there is first that true peace within the souls of humans (Brown,

1989 & Hahn, 1993 cited in Mayton, 2009). This notion of inner peace complements one of the co-researcher's ideas in the present study that inner peace may even enable a person to live with violent people peacefully.

Co-researchers who viewed nonviolence as the transaction between self and others appeared to focus both on the role of the individual and others in their conceptualizations. This might be described as interconnectedness between a person and other people in promoting nonviolence. Although, as far as we know, there are no empirical findings regarding views of nonviolence as transaction between the individual and other people, this subtheme seems to fit well with Desmond Tutu's notion of *Ubantu* which means, "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. I am because you are" (Summay, 2009, p. 82). In this sense, if others' peace is affected, an individual's inner peace is also affected and vice versa, as one co-researcher in the present study vividly put it. Taking the subtheme to extreme, one may also relate it with one of social psychology's prominent theorists, Kurt Lewin (1951) and his formulation of field theory that regarded behavior as a function of the person and the environment. We may thus construct nonviolent behavior as a function of the individual and other people surrounding him/her.

Lived Experience

Violent and nonviolent experiences, nonviolence out of violent background were the three subthemes that emerged under this theme. Co-researchers were experiencing violence from their childhood. Generally, research literature supports this finding. Azar, Goslin and Okado (2009) indicate that families can be the learning ground for hatred, prejudice, and violence. Nonetheless, there were co-researchers who experienced nonviolence so far in their lives. Interpreting others' behavior positively and forgiving others appear to be characteristics of these co-researchers. As in violent experience, backgrounds contributed to nonviolent experiences.

The emergence of nonviolence out of violent background subtheme may rarely be anticipated. This is because one's violent backgrounds usually encourage the individual to be violent; likewise nonviolent background fosters nonviolent behavior in the individual. One co-researcher's narration that his childhood violent experiences sometimes emerge even in his current behavior supports this contention. Struggling against and defeating violent environmental circumstances, especially in the early years of life, and following nonviolent paths requires personal stamina. Fostering such stamina may be one of the appropriate responses to our today's violence-ridden social world.

Dynamics of Nonviolent Behavior

The closer examination of the dynamics of nonviolent behavior resulted in the emergence of six major themes. The *inner resources* major theme is concerned with person-related factors that influence development of nonviolent behavior. Here developing critical thinking skills and other personal capacities for selecting nonviolent ways of life from multitudes of violent ideas and behaviors appears to matter. Co-researchers explicating this theme appear to be of the opinion that equipped with these personal capacities, an individual can turn adversity into opportunity. In the literature, although these intellectual capacities seem to gain less empirical attention, personality characteristics of a peaceful person are examined to some extent. For instance, Nelson (2005) cited in Mayton (2009) developed the peace within self-model which included such personality characteristics as agreeableness, anger control, the values of universalism and benevolence, forgiveness and optimism. Coupled with these personal characteristics, critical thinking and discerning cognitive capacities, which emerged as a theme in the present study, may pave the way for developing nonviolent behaviors.

The *family* theme is concerned with the place of the family in developing nonviolent behavior. The role of family cohesion, family members, and mothers were found to be the outstanding features

of this theme. Family cohesion may have fostered development of nonviolent behavior by helping family members to closely follow and share ideas among themselves. As one co-researcher noted, during interaction, family members evaluate one another' behavior. In this case, they may use the opportunity to rebuke one another to abandon violent ways and to adapt nonviolent life styles. These findings are generally in line with the empirical literature. Azar, Goslin and Okado (2009) point out that families model appropriate patterns of interpersonal behavior including respecting others, protection of the vulnerable and sex roles. By the same token, Avci and Güçra (2010) reported that families of violent adolescents had more deficits and conflicts in problem-solving, communication, behavior control and general functioning when compared to the families of nonviolent adolescents.

The *media* theme depicted the place of media in the development of nonviolent behavior. When used appropriately, as the co-researchers noted, media can foster development of nonviolent behavior. Used inappropriately, media can, in addition to being an obstacle to the development of nonviolent behavior, lay a favorable ground for the development of violence. As for the support of the literature to the above findings, more than the facilitating role of media, its debilitating role appears to gain empirical attention. Starting from the classical Bobo Doll Experiment (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961), a number of studies have investigated the violence fostering role of media through modeling.

Regarding the role of media in facilitating development of nonviolent behavior, the literature appears to focus on the role of government in promoting free flow of information (United Nations Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace, 1999 cited in Loewenberg, 2009). But we contend that, free flow of information and knowledge can have positive contribution to the development of nonviolent behavior only if: i) care is taken in the content of the information disseminated and ii) the individual possesses a well-developed personal capacity to select nonviolent information and pursue them

consistently. Currently, we do not think that many media institutions intentionally focus on these to develop nonviolent behavior.

The *religion* theme focuses on the role of religion in facilitating and debilitating development of nonviolent behavior. Religion appears to foster development of nonviolent behavior via several ways including teaching good values and fearing the creator and thus, refraining from violent actions. Even though all of the co-researchers witnessed the positive contribution of religion, some of them did not hesitate to point out its negative effect. These findings are generally consistent with the research literature. As articulated by Silberman (2005), depending on how the religions' values are interpreted and implemented, and the followers' commitment, religions not only have strong potential to facilitate conflict resolution and nonviolence but they can also encourage hatred, discrimination, and violence.

The *educational institutions* theme is concerned with the role of a school and university in fostering nonviolent behavior. Also co-researchers indicated some school and university-related problems that may be obstacles to the development of nonviolent behavior. Important facilitators of nonviolent behavior appear to be helping students to conform to rules and regulations, favorable conditions for engaging students in academic and extracurricular activities, teachers' good manners and courses such as Civics and Ethical Education. At the school level, especially elementary schools and KGs, teachers' lack of skills of handling children seems to be a challenge. This may make teachers unintentionally model violent behavior. The problem may arise due to inadequate training or less attention given to psychology and other related courses in teacher education. At the university level, problems related to the registrar and to instructors appear to outweigh others. Here discharging responsibility, respecting students and establishing warm interactions with them, which may lay ground for nonviolent behavior, seem to be lacking. The research literature generally points out the role of educational institutions in developing nonviolent

behavior. The role of schools seems to be salient in the global campaign for peace education. Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace (2010) contend that the most significant way of promoting a culture of peace is through peace education: "To reach peace, we need to teach peace (p. V)."

The *socio-cultural challenges* theme focuses on the social and culture-related factors that obstruct development of nonviolent behavior. Mistrusting appears to impede genuine social interaction which is the base of nonviolent behavior. Culture of retaliation is another obstacle to the development of nonviolent behavior. An individual who thinks of retaliation may not think of ways of living in peace with a person to be hurt in return. In addition, the strong social and cultural pressures to take revenge may exacerbate the retaliation progress, and even sometimes remind, in case the revenger wants to intentionally leave it. As described by the co-researchers, this culture is rampant in Ethiopia.

The research literature is generally in line with these findings. In Ethiopia, as co-researchers indicated, retaliation seems to be commonplace. In some cases, it seems that retaliation boosts an individual's or a group's esteem. For example, Sisay (2007) reported that pastoralists in the Southern Omo Zone feel profoundly humiliated if an attack on a family is not revenged. Overall, these challenges indicate how important and difficult is developing nonviolent behavior in the Ethiopian context.

Conclusions

In sum, *other-orientation*, *self-orientation* and *transaction between self and others* were the three views of nonviolent behavior found in the present study. Similarly, *violent*, *nonviolent*, and *nonviolence out of violent background* were found to be the lived experiences of the co-researchers. In the same manner, *inner resources*, *family*, *media*, *religion*, *educational institutions* and *socio-cultural challenges* were found to be the dynamic factors influencing development of nonviolent behavior. Generally, these findings are consistent

with the existing literature. More interesting findings of the present study may be subthemes that emerged as *transaction between self and others*, *nonviolence out of violent background* and *distilling environmental factors*. This is because, relative to the others, these subthemes were unexpected. The *socio-cultural challenges* theme is also of interest because it delineates some of the context-related factors that may impede development of nonviolent behavior.

Implications

All of the findings of the present inquiry may have theoretical and practical implications. The results of the study may impel educational institutions to reflect on whether their existing organizational environment and culture are conducive to the development of nonviolent behavior of their students. This is because, several educational institution-related findings that can impede nonviolent behavior emerged. Overall, the findings call for families, students, teachers, educational administrators, and religion and media institutions to integrate their efforts in building culture of peace in Ethiopia.

The study has also theoretical implications in that it may pave the way for developing a socio-culturally sensitive theory of nonviolent behavior in Ethiopia. As a category of social psychology, the field of peace psychology is at its infancy. However, there are some social psychological models and theories of nonviolence (e.g., Kool's Theory of Nonviolence) which are summarized by Mayton (2009). Because these models and theories were developed in other countries, especially in the Western individualist cultures, they may not readily provide explanations for nonviolent behavior in Ethiopia's relatively collectivist culture. Thus, context specific theory of nonviolence will be indispensable.

Accordingly, by examining the relationships among the themes developed in the present inquiry, some theoretical framework to be subjected to empirical scrutiny in the future may be suggested. For example, we may consider the themes *views of nonviolence and lived experience,*

which in combination may give rise to nonviolent behavior, to be influenced by several factors. The six themes that emerged under the domain *dynamics of nonviolent behavior* may be regarded as some of those factors. We classified the themes *inner resources and family* as *proximal* simply because these factors may influence views of nonviolence and its lived experiences more closely

and directly than the other factors, especially in the early years of life. Then we grouped the themes *media, religion, educational institutions,* and *socio-cultural challenges* as *distal* factors because these factors may influence views of nonviolence and its lived experiences less closely and less directly than the other factors. Figure 1 depicts these relationships.
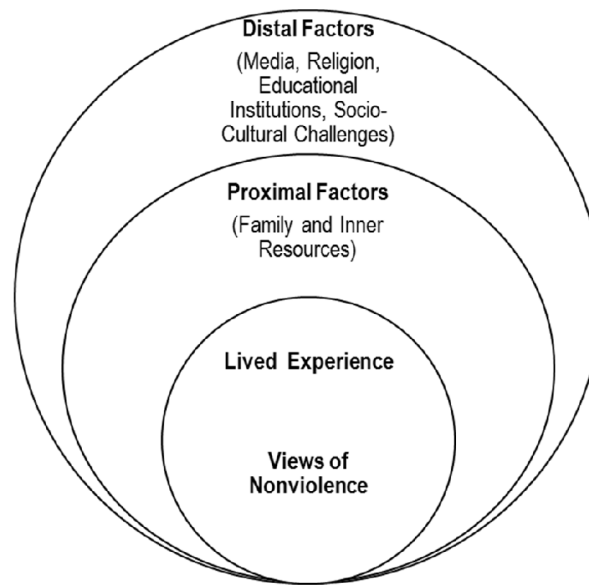

Figure 1: *Conceptual Relations among Themes Emerged in the Study*

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<u>Notes</u>

[3]Amharic is the national language of Ethiopia.

[4]Afaan Oromo is the language of the Oromo People.

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