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## The Mediating Role of Self-motivated Behavior in Intergroup Contact for Building Intergroup Harmony

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#### Abstract

Two studies investigated the mediating roles of self-motivated behavior (self-efficacy, selfinterest and learning behavior) in accounting for the influence of intergroup member contact for intergroup harmony. In study 1, seventy-six (males = 55.26%; females = 44.74%) freshmen students, age ranged between 16 and 25, (M = 22.54, SD = 4.45) years voluntarily participated. Cross-sectional design with regression analysis revealed that intergroup contact significantly predicted intergroup harmony. In study 2, one hundred and two students (males = 56.2%); females = 43.8%) freshmen (100 level) of ethnic origin (Igbo = 45.6%; Hausa/Fulani = 20.4%; *Yoruba* = 24.5% & others = 9.5%); religious orientations (Christians = 62%; Muslim = 38%) age ranged between 17 and 26, (M = 22.15, SD = 2.35) years, voluntarily participated. Crosssectional design which adopted regression analysis showed significant positive indirect effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony through self-efficacy, self-interest and learning behaviour. The outcome of the study suggested for the first time a framework for understanding the roles of self-motivated behavior in intergroup member contact's effect for intergroup harmony. The study results highlighted the need to consider self-motivated behavior in developing social interventions for peace building and intergroup harmony in multi-ethnic nation.

Keyword: intergroup harmony, intergroup contact, self-motivated behavior

#### Introduction

Fostering peaceful and harmonious relationship among a community of people has been a concern to social psychologists, researchers, and policy makers (White, Harvey & Abu-Rayya, 2015). Prevalence of insurgences across the globe which ravages intergroup harmonious existence; for example, religious disturbances, racial antecedents such as discrimination,



stereotype, prejudice and xenophobia (Clay, 2017) and ethno-religious crises e.g. Boko Haram in Nigeria, the clashes between herdsmen and farmers in the southern parts of the country, and the agitation for actualization of Biafra as a sovereign state by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), have all increased the need to intensify efforts in this direction of research. More worrisome is the existence of negative intergroup harmony among diverse ethnic and religious groups within a country (e.g., Nigeria), which in recent times is threatening the corporate existence of the nation.

Effectiveness of contact interventions in facilitating intergroup harmonious relationship has been established (Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). No previous intervention considered such personal dispositions. Therefore, more social psychological intervention based on personal dispositions and intergroup contact for building intergroup harmony is apt. Personal dispositions for examples, selfefficacy, self-interest, and learning behavior, defined in this context as "self-motivated behavior" have not been studied or previously appeared literature of in intergroup harmony. In the context of selfintergroup harmony, we define motivated behaviour as voluntary action by an individual to achieve a social outcome. Self-efficacy is an individual's conviction in his or her ability to reach out and establish contact with members of other group; selfinterest is an individual's motivation to pursue gains in interpersonal relationship, and learning behavior refers to ones www.nigerianjsp.com

motivation to exchange ideas in inter-group member relationship. And, we reasoned that self-motivated behaviors are important variables for interventions predicated on intergroup harmony via group contact. *Intergroup harmony* 

Intergroup harmony refers to good relations or positive relation devoid of prejudice, and social psychologists' interest in improving intergroup harmony and prejudice reduction relied on the contact hypothesis (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The hypothesis assumes that positive relationship between members of different groups fosters intergroup harmony, especially when such interaction occurs under favorable conditions, for example, equality of status between groups (Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010). Also, intergroup harmony improves in the presence of personality which variables require personal engagement and emotional involvement, promotes individuals' empathic building with the out-group (Comerford, 2003). Such interactions are capable of providing individuals with an alternative demonstration of group norms relating to tolerance and acceptance of out-group members (White, Harvey, & Abu-Rayya, 2015), and increases with high levels of selfefficacy (Mazziotta, Mummendey, & Wright, 2011). Furthermore, interventions using active self-engagement tend to produce more enduring change in harmonious relationship (Oskamp, 2000; White & Abu-Rayya, 2012; White, Abu-Rayya, & Weitzel, 2014), increase bicultural identity (Phinney, 1990) and can promote cross-ethnic friendship. Thus, the



question which requires answer is how selfmotivated behavior intervention will produce intergroup harmony among Nigerians?

# Intergroup contact strategies and mediator variables

During positive intergroup member contacts, cooperation and shared goals are likely to occur in part because they create a greater sense of common identity (Gaertner, Dovidio, Guerra, Hehman, & Saguy, 2016), and contact is positively associated with attitude strength (e.g., Christ, et al., 2010). Previous research demonstrated that contact exerts its influence on prejudice reduction or intergroup harmony both by reducing negative affect (e.g., intergroup anxiety) and inducing positive affective processes (e.g., empathy and perspective taking; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). And, researchers have identified mediators of intergroup contact (Barlow, Louis, & Hewtone, 2009; Gonz'alez, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008; Swart, Hewstone, Christ, & Voci, 2010; Gomez, Tropp, & Fernandez, 2011; Turner, Hewstone, Voci, & Vonofakou, 2008), and intergroup contact is positively associated with attitude strength (e.g., Christ, et al., 2010). No previous research has linked direct intergroup contact with intergroup harmony through self-motivated behavior.

## Study 1

We predicted that intergroup contact would positively influence intergroup harmony. Specifically, intergroup members should be more disposed to seek harmonious relationship with outgroup members when asked to do so by authority figure.

Hypothesis 1: Intergroup member contact will have positive predictive influence on intergroup harmony.

# Method

# Participants

Seventy-six students (males 55.3%); females = 44.7\%) freshmen (i.e., 100 level students) of ethnic origin (Igbo = 44.7%, Hausa/Fulani = 21.1%, Yoruba = 23.7% & others = 10.5%) voluntarily participated in a study at Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, in which the three major Nigerian tribes (Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba) are proportionally represented in what is called federal character. The participants' age ranged between 16 and 25 years ( $M_{age} = 21.17$ , SD = 2.25). Intergroup and outgroup membership were simulated between freshmen and their senior students who were at least in their second year in the university. The freshmen were measured on both direct intergroup member contact and intergroup harmony.

# Procedures

Freshmen students who reported for their contact with the course lecturer (the receive researcher) to lecture on Introduction to Psychology 1 (PSY 101) were informed at the end of a one-hour lecture that there was a study in which they have the option to participate. Sixty-eight students voluntarily opted to participate. The participants were informed by the researchers that the study was aimed at investigating how people relate with people of other group. To assess their level of



intergroup contact, the students were given assignments on the next topic to discuss in the class and were encouraged to borrow notes from senior students they never met before. They were further encouraged to borrow from people different from their state of origin or ethnic groups, an action they were told would earn them some course marks. The participants were further told to borrow the notes within seven days and present to the lecturer the notes, names, and phone numbers of the students that gave them the notes. This was done to control for unwarranted maneuvering (e.g., collecting notes from unrecognized outgroup member) which could arise from the participants. The local Institutional Research and Ethics Review Committee approved all procedures followed in the study.

## Measures

*Independent variables*: The independent variable was intergroup contact. Those who could successfully identify and borrow notes the next day from older students were scored 7 points, those who succeeded in borrowing notes the second day scored 6 points, three days later scored 5 points, four days later scored 4 points, five days later scored 3 points, six days later scored 2 points, and those who succeeded on the seventh day had 1 point. Those who could not identify older students after the seventh day made 0 point.

Dependent variable: The dependent variable was intergroup harmony. To measure intergroup harmony, we devised self-report in which the participants were asked to rate on a 6-point continuum, their willingness to relate with people of other groups. For examples, not willing at all = 1, not willing www.nigerianjsp.com = 2, rarely willing = 3, willing = 4, more willing = 5, most willing = 6. We subjected this instrument to confirmation factor analysis (CFA) to test its suitability using 45 students (males = 68%, females = 32%); age ranged between 17 and 24 years ( $M_{age}$  = 20.50 & SD = 3.21). The CFA resulted in an acceptable model fit ( $x^2$  = 67.49; df = 21; p < 0.001), RMSEA < 0.001. The two weeks test-retest reliability of the instrument was  $\alpha$ = 0.85. Further, out of the five judges consulted to confirm the instrument on: not suitable, suitable, and very suitable; four confirmed the instrument "very suitable" to measure intergroup harmony.

## Data analysis and Results

Simple linear regression analysis was performed in which intergroup member regressed on contact was intergroup harmony to determine how it (intergroup member contact) predicted intergroup harmony. Simple linear regression analysis results revealed that intergroup member contact positively and significantly predicted intergroup harmony,  $\beta = .55$ , t(75) = 5.67, p  $< .001, d^2 = .19$ . The equation model was significant, F(1, 74) = 32.17, p < .001, R =.55,  $R^2$  = .30, Cohen's f = .43, indicating that intergroup contact accounted for approximately 30% of the total variance observed.

#### Discussion

The findings showed that inter-group member contact had positive predictive influence on intergroup harmony. The outcomes of this study are similar with contact hypothesis or intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew, 1998) and suggested that positive interaction increases harmony (e.g.,



Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010). Thus, positive contact with intergroup member which has intention to gain personal advantage increases the opportunity of positive interpersonal relationship and fosters intergroup harmony. Therefore, the finding contributes to studies showing that intergroup member contact predicted intergroup harmony, but did not clarify the pathway linking intergroup members and harmonious relationship. To address this issue, in Study 2 we tested the mediating self-motivated behavior role of on intergroup contact.

## Study 2

We established that direct intergroup member contact has positive predictive influence on intergroup harmony in study 1. Intergroup harmony improves in the presence of personality variables (Comerford, 2003), and increases with high self-efficacy levels of (Mazziotta, Mummendey, & Wright, 2011). The positive predictive influence observed in study 1 could result from self-motivated behaviors such as self-efficacy, self-interest and behavior exhibited learning bv the participants. Therefore, we proposed that self-efficacy, self-interest and learning behavior would mediate the influence of intergroup contact on intergroup harmony. And, we tested the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Self-efficacy will mediate the influence of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony.

Hypothesis 2b: Self-interest, will mediate the influence of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony.

*Hypothesis* 2*c*: *Learning behavior will mediate the influence of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony.* 

Hypothesis 2d: Self-efficacy, self-interest, and learning behavior will jointly mediate the influence of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony.

# Method

# Participants

One hundred and two students (males = 56.2%); females = 43.8%) freshmen (i.e., 100 level students) of ethnic origin (Igbo = 45.6%, Hausa/Fulani = 20.4%, Yoruba = 24.5% & others = 9.5%); religious orientations (Christians = 62%, Muslims = 38%) participated. All participants were freshmen from federal university that has federal character representation of students' origin, whose age ranged between 17 and 26 years ( $M_{age} = 22.15$ , SD = 2.35). *Procedures* 

The procedure adopted was identical to that of study 1. In addition, on the seventh day after contact had been established, instruments on intergroup harmony, selfinterest, self-efficacy, and learning behavior were administered to the participants and they were debriefed.

# Instruments/measures

Participants completed intergroup harmony self-report scale, self-interest subscale of self- and other-interest inventory (SOII: Gerbasi & Prentice, 2013), General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES: Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) and Learning Behavior Questionnaire (LBQ: Edmondson, 1999).



**GSES**: General Self-Efficacy Scale is a 10item questionnaire that measured general self-efficacy (e.g., 'I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort'). Participants responded to this questionnaire on 5-point option format (e.g., strongly agree = 5 through undecided = 3 to strongly disagree = 1). The Cronbach's alpha for scores from the GSES in the present study was 0.86

**SOII**: Self-interest sub-scale of self- and other-interest inventory is a 9-item selfreport questionnaire assessing self-interest. The instrument was developed for use with college undergraduates and with the aim to predict behavior, hence the justification for its use in this study (e.g., 'I am constantly looking for ways to get ahead'). The participants responded on 5-point option format (e.g., strongly agree = 5 through undecided = 3 to strongly disagree = 1). The Cronbach's alpha for scores from the SOII in the present study ranged from .77 to .88.

**LBQ**: Learning Behavior Questionnaire is a 7-item inventory assessing learning behavior among workers (Edmondson, 1999) and was modified in this study for use among undergraduate students. Further modification reflected in personalizing some of the statements (e.g., 'We regularly take time to figure out ways to improve our organization's work processes') was modified to read (e.g., I regularly take time to figure out ways to improve my class work process). Edmondson (1999) established the reliability of behavior learning questionnaire,  $\alpha = 0.84$  while Carmeli, Brueller, and Dutton (2009) established the www.nigerianjsp.com

reliability,  $\alpha = 0.85$ . However, due to the modification and use in area different from the culture it was originally developed, we reliability established the of the questionnaires in pilot study with Nigerian sample (N = 52; males = 65%, females = 35%); age ranged between 17 and 25 ( $M_{age} =$ 21.03, SD = 3.04). Thus, The Cronbach's alpha for scores from the LBQ in the present study was 0.91. The participants also responded to this questionnaire on 5-point option format (e.g., strongly agree = 5through undecided = 3 to strongly disagree = 1).

# Data analysis

The study employed multimethod approach of data analysis. First, intercorrelation analysis was run to establish the relationships among the study variables. Next, regression analysis with Process Macro (Hayes, 2013) was performed using simultaneous method to test mediation of self-motivated behavior (direct and indirect effects) between intergroup contact and intergroup harmony.

# Results

The results of intercorrelation analysis were presented in Table 1. The preliminary intercorrelation analysis results revealed that intergroup member contact was positively and significantly related with intergroup harmony r(102) = .78, p < .001, self-efficacy was positively and significantly related with intergroup harmony, r = 0.49, p< .001 and intergroup member contact, r =0.65, p < .001; self-interest had positive and significant relationship with intergroup



harmony, r = 0.52, p < .001 and intergroup member contact, r = 0.65, p < .001, and learning behavior was significantly and positively related with intergroup harmony, r = 0.64 and with intergroup member contact, r = 0.71, p < .001. Further, self-Table 1

has positive and significant interest relationship with self-efficacy, r = 0.86, P <.001. Learning behavior had positive and significant relationships with both selfinterest, r = 0.88, p < .001 and self-efficacy r = 0.82, p < .001.

Means, standard deviations and intercorrelation for scores on intergroup contact, intergroup self-motivated behavior harmony and

Variable	М	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Intergroup harmony	4.72	1.65	_								
Intergroup contact	4.63	1.84	.78**	-							
Self-motivated behave	vior										
Self-efficacy	28.01	5.67	.49**	.65*	* _						
Self-interest	25.04	4.78	.52**	.65*	* .86**	_					
Learning behavior	17.68	4.89	.64**	.71*	* .82**	.88**	-				
Gender	2.35	0.77	.09	.12	.01	01	01	-			
Age	21.16	2.56	20	.03	04	.02	.04	12	_		
Ethnic group	1.03	1.06	.13	.10	.01	.03	07	14	.05	-	

Note: N = 102; \*\*correlation is significant at < 0.01 level (2-tailed). Note: R = .62;  $R^2 = .38$ 

Mediation analyses using Process Macro. Multiple mediation analyses were performed on each domain of self-motivated behavior to examine whether perceived self-efficacy, self-interest, and learning behavior mediated the influence of intergroup member contact intergroup harmony. Bootstrapping on analyses (1000 re-samples) were conducted using methods described by Hayes (2013) employing model 6 for mediation of independent variables. То test our hypotheses, as we were interested in specific indirect effects of intergroup member on intergroup harmony, contact selfefficacy, self-interest and learning behavior were entered simultaneously in the analysis as mediators.

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Figure 1 shows the multiple mediation results of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony with selfefficacy, self-interest, and learning behavior as mediators. First, intergroup contact significantly predicted self-efficacy (the first mediator), B = 2.09, SE = 0.36, p < .001. The first mediator predicted self-interest (the second mediator), B = 0.73, SE = 0.09, p < 0.09.001 and intergroup contact predicted the second mediator, B = 0.74, SE = 0.31, p =.01. The first mediator did not significantly predict learning behavior (the third mediator), B = 0.11, SE = 0.09, p = .39. The second mediator significantly predicted the third mediator, B = .62, SE = 0.09, p < .001intergroup contact significantly and predicted third mediator, B = 0.47, SE =



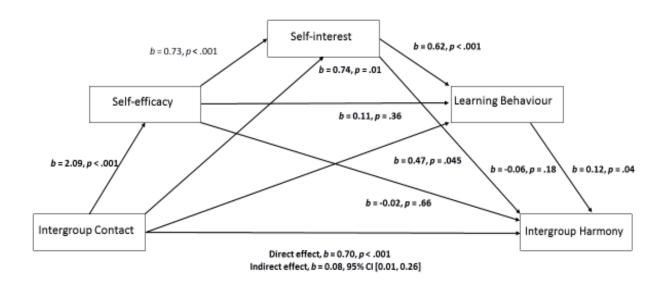
0.24, p = .05. Further, self-efficacy did not significantly predict intergroup harmony, B = -0.01, SE = 0.03, p = .68; self-interest did significantly predict intergroup not harmony, B = -0.06, SE = 0.04, p = .16 and learning behavior significantly predicted intergroup harmony, B = 0.09, SE = 0.05, p = .04. The omnibus test of total effects was significant for the three motivating behaviors, F(3, 64) = 34.34, p < .001. With regard to specific direct effects, self-efficacy did not have significant direct effect on intergroup harmony, B = -0.01, SE = 0.03, p = .67: 95% CI [-.01, 0.05], direct effect of self-interest on intergroup harmony was not significant, B = -0.061, SE = 0.05, p = .17: 95% CI [-0.15, 0.03], direct effect of learning behavior was significant, B = 0.09, SE = 0.05, p = .04: 95% CI [.00, .19], and direct effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony was significant, B =.70, *SE*, .08, *p* < .001: 95% CI [0.53, 0.87]

With regard to the test of indirect effect, the omnibus test of total indirect effects was not significant for self-motivated behavior, B = 0.02, SE = 0.06: 95% CI [-0.09, 0.14], whereas there was a significant indirect effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony through selfefficacy, self-interest and learning behaviour B = 0.078, BCa CI [0.01, 0.26], given that its 95% confidence interval does not contain

zero. Regarding specific indirct effect, there was no significant indirect effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony through self-efficacy, B = -.03, SE = .07: 95% CI [-0.19, 0.05], there was no significant indirect effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony through self-efficacy and self-interest, B = -0.08, SE = 0.07: 95% CI [-0.29, 0.00] and there was no significant indirect effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony through self-efficacy and learning behaviour, B = 0.02, SE = 0.02: 95% CI [-0.01, 0.08]. Also, there was no significant indirect effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony through self-interest, B = -0.04, SE = 0.04: 95% CI [-0.18, 0.01]. However, there was sigificant indirect effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony through self-interest and learning behaviour, B = 0.06, SE = 0.06: 95% CI [0.00, 0.16], and there was indirect effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony through learning behaviour, B =0.05, SE = 0.03: 95% CI [0.00, 0.11], given that their 95% CIs do not contain zero. (See Figure. 1).

Figure 1: Model of intergroup contact as a predictor of intergroup harmony, mediated by self-efficacy, self-interest and learning behaviour





*Figure 1*: Model of intergroup contact as a predictor of intergroup harmony, mediated by self-efficacy, self-interest and learning behaviour. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is a BCa bootstrapped CI based on 1000 re-samples.

#### Discussion

Study 2 addressed for the first time the mediating role of self-motivated behavior (self-efficacy, self-interest, and learning behavior) in accounting for direct intergroup member contact effects on intergroup harmony. Self-efficacy and selfinterest produced no significant mediating effects in intergroup contact's influence on intergroup harmony, whereas self-interest combined with learning behavior to account for intergroup contact's influence on intergroup harmony. The study also found that there was significant positive mediation effect of learning behavior on intergroup member contact which turned out to be the most observed powerful single mediator of intergroup contact on intergroup harmony. Overall, positive indirect mediation effect of intergroup contact on intergroup harmony was observed when self-efficacy, selflearning behavior interest. and are combined. Therefore, the findings of this study highlighted the link between intergroup contact and intergroup behavior through self-motivated behavior.

# General discussion and conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to determine how intergroup contact predicted intergroup harmony. The study further explored how self-motivated



behavior (self-efficacy, self-interest, and learning behavior) accounted for the influence of intergroup member contact for intergroup harmony. When members of different groups are brought together in face-to-face interactions that require pursuit of social benefits, inter-group controversy or disharmony will be neutralized leading to promoting of bi-cultural identity (Phinney, 1990). And, intergroup members will perceive the need to work supportively as opposed to competitively to achieve a common set goal (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).

The hypothesis that self-efficacy would mediate the influence of intergroup contact on intergroup harmony when standing alone was not supported. This implies that individual's conviction in his or her ability to reach out and establish intergroup contact only cannot produce enough motivation to enhance positive intergroup contact so as to ensure intergroup harmony. For self-efficacy to exert influence on intergroup member's ability to influence intergroup harmony there is need for the presence of other self-motivated behaviors. Also, the finding of this study did not support the hypothesis that self-interest alone would mediate the effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony. However, learning behavior alone was found to mediate the effect of intergroup contact on intergroup harmony. The plausible outcome could have been made possible due to learning disposition of the participants. Therefore, learning behavior is a motivating exchanging ideas factor in through intergroup member contact. The ability to www.nigerianjsp.com

take time to figure out ways to improve one's class work process will compel one to engage in intergroup contact and work towards harmonious relationship. We believed the validity of the outcome since the present sample was drawn from student population.

The hypothesis which stated that self-efficacy, self-interest, and learning behavior would combine to mediate the influence of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony was supported. As expected, intergroup member contact has influence on intergroup harmony through self-efficacy, self-interest, and learning behavior. Although, learning behavior was found to exert the most positive mediating effect on intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony, its influence seems to have increased in the presence of selfefficacy and self-interest. The implication is that the three self-motivated behavior constructs must be considered together designing social while psychological intervention aimed to building intergroup harmony.

The findings and supports of this study to intergroup contact theory have both theoretical and practical implications (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; White, Harvey & Abu-Rayya, 2015), who argue that direct positive contact with inter-group member is significant factor which positively influence intergroup harmony. Practically, contact theory has long been applied to reduce prejudice and discrimination which bring about intergroup clashes. Specifically, the outcome of this study can be applied as a means of integrating students immediately



they enroll for academic work in their new school environment. Generally, the outcome of this study demonstrated understanding of relationships and mediating effects of selfefficacy, self-interest and learning behavior intergroup member on contact and intergroup harmony. In fact, this study established for the first time the effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony through self-motivated behavior as defined in this paper. In this context, the present research strongly suggests that consideration of self-motivated behavior in designing social psychological intervention aimed to building intergroup harmony in the world of intergroup current clashes, Islamophobia, xenophobia; religious and ethnic divides is warranted.

#### Limitations

Certain limitations should be noted in the current study. The sample size was limited and participants were freshmen undergraduate students from a specific university. Therefore, caution should be exercised in generalization of these findings. Additional research is needed with a larger sample size and a more representative sample of participants. The outcome of the study can spur and open avenue for more studies to establish social psychological factors which can motivate intergroup member contact and so determine intergroup harmony among social, political and religious inter-group members. We did not know whether the intergroup harmony established as result of the outcome of this sustained. Therefore. study can be longitudinal study is required to establish evidence for the sustainability of the behavior.

## Future research

The study raises questions regarding the importance of social psychological intervention. How do social psychologists design social psychological intervention using self-motivated behavior to advance peace and harmony?

# Conclusion

The study's results suggest that learning behavior produced the most mediation effects of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony. Selfefficacy and learning behavior combined to mediate the effect of intergroup member contact on intergroup harmony among freshmen undergraduates. And, the three components of self-motivated behavior jointly accounted for the influence of intergroup contact on intergroup harmony. To promote intergroup harmony, selfmotivated behaviors such as self-efficacy, self-interest, and learning behavior should be involved and inculcated into individuals. Besides theoretical understanding of intergroup harmony and link between psychosocial variables and propensities towards building intergroup harmony, the results of this study can be applied to bridge the current disharmony created by xenophobia and islamophobia, herdsmen and farmers in many parts of Nigeria.

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