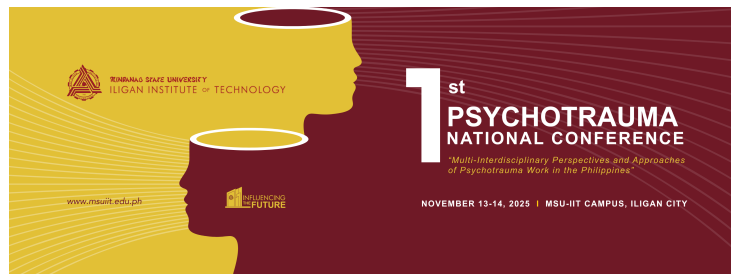


## National Psychotrauma Conference 2025



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# The Paradox of Intergroup Contact: Conflict Exposure, Common Mental Disorders, Ethos of Conflict, and the Moderating Role of Intergroup Contact

*Thursday, November 13, 2025 1:30 PM (15 minutes)*

The psychological processes through which conflict exposure shapes conflict-supporting beliefs remain insufficiently understood, particularly in contexts of protracted intergroup conflict. To address this gap, we examined the mediating role of posttraumatic stress and depression in the relationship between conflict exposure and ethos of conflict, as well as the moderating influence of intergroup contact. Using data from 612 Moro adults in the southern Philippines who had experienced political violence, results revealed that greater conflict exposure was associated with higher levels of posttraumatic stress and depression, which in turn predicted stronger endorsement of ethos of conflict. Unexpectedly, intergroup contact amplified—rather than reduced—these indirect effects, indicating that contact under conditions of unresolved conflict can reinforce rather than diminish the ethos of conflict. These findings suggest that mental health distress may transform contact into a mechanism that sustains conflict attitudes, highlighting the importance of addressing trauma and depression as a precursor to contact-based peacebuilding interventions. Conceptualizing intergroup contact within a mental health framework offers a more nuanced understanding of when and how contact can either promote reconciliation or entrench divisions.

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