



THE INSTITUTE FOR MUSLIM  
ADVANCEMENT AND  
RENEWAL

# Mental Health

*Beyond Industry Barriers and Biases*

Call for  
Submissions

20  
26

In a time where distraction is relentless and so many are searching for meaning, many find that inner tranquility has become increasingly out of reach. A booming market of mindfulness apps, self-help influencers, and secular therapy promises relief, yet it often offers only temporary calm. These approaches, grounded in materialist assumptions, treat life's struggles as biochemical disruptions rather than challenges meant to direct us toward God. In seeking to soothe the body and mind as the highest goal, do we neglect the deeper reality of the soul?

Western mental health care promises thriving or prosperity, productivity, happiness, and comfort as the ultimate goals. Yet for countless Muslims worldwide, from the West to those living under occupation and distress, mental well-being is about maintaining dignity, steadfastness, and purpose even amid adversity. The Islamic tradition's vision of the self does not settle for pause, it seeks to purify, and we ought to do more than just cope because our aim is for a return to God.

This year through IMAR's research symposium, we will critically evaluate the unchallengeable assumptions of the modern mental health field. We do so not to belittle or dismiss its contributions, but to clarify its limits and to offer a richer, God-centered framework of well-being. IMAR's work is not beholden to state or industry funding, therefore we are uniquely positioned to raise questions that serve the higher purpose of benefitting our communities and restoring balance to the discourse.

# Areas of Inquiry

## 1. The Self as Ultimate Reference Point

- To what extent does centering the self as sovereign shape mental well-being today?
- How does a self-centered approach affect one's relationships with community, family, and a higher purpose?
- Can mental health outcomes improve through the adoption of Islamic teachings that reframe the self as an amanah (trust) entrusted by God?

## 2. Distress as Pathology

- How do modern systems of care distinguish (or fail to distinguish) between natural emotions like grief, sadness, fear, or anxiety and clinically diagnosable disorders?
- What are the risks of medicalizing ordinary human struggles?

# Areas of Inquiry

## 3. Therapy and Outsourced Healing

- What role should professional therapy play in Muslim well-being, and where might its limits lie?
- In what ways can faith, family, and community fill the gaps in traditional therapy and mental health care?
- What does the rapid growth of the therapy industry reveal about broader social and cultural conditions (e.g., overwork, disconnection, or loneliness)?

## 4. Beyond Secular Mindfulness

- What can the popularity of mindfulness, meditation, or psychedelic therapies teach us about modern spiritual hunger?
- Do these practices remain confined to a materialist framework, or do they open genuine possibilities for transcendence?
- How do Islamic practices of remembrance and meditation compare, overlap, or diverge?

# Areas of Inquiry

## 5. Value-Free Therapy

- How do claims of nonjudgment or value-free support shape what is considered “healthy”?
- Can the suspension of moral judgment normalize harmful, self-destructive, and unethical behavior?
- What would it look like to balance compassion and accessibility with accountability and Divine Truth?

## 6. The Trauma Lens

- How has the rise of trauma discourse shaped how people understand themselves and their capacity for resilience in the face of adversity?
- To what extent are individuals and communities defined by traumatic experiences? In what ways does identifying strongly with trauma experiences help or hinder healing?
- How can individuals and communities acknowledge and validate trauma without centering their identities around traumatic experiences?

# Areas of Inquiry

## 7. Pharmaceutical Interventions

- How has the widespread prescription of psychiatric medication influenced the way we think about mental health?
- What are the strengths and risks of pharmacological approaches?
- How might moral and spiritual dimensions of healing be integrated alongside physiological treatment, or even replace it?

# Our Approach

IMAR is not a typical academic center. We work at the crossroads of knowledge and lived faith, where ideas are shaped in real, on-the-ground experiences of the community. Our work brings together scholars, professionals, students, and everyday people so that what we produce is both thoughtful, practical, and accessible. What makes IMAR unique is our grounding in the Tarbiya community. This gives us a front-row seat into how spiritual teachings actually play out in people's lives, and it allows us insight into patterns and challenges that universities or research centers often miss.

Through our research anthologies, symposia, and public programs, IMAR explores timeless Islamic ideas and shows how they can shed light on today's struggles. Our vision goes even further. We do not simply adjust Islam to fit the modern world, and instead, we use our tradition to imagine a future where faith guides questions of who we are and what true flourishing looks like. Our goal is for this work to ripple outwards, shaping how families raise children, how communities support one another, how institutions operate, and how society at large thinks about humanity's purpose. By linking scholarship with real-world experience, IMAR seeks to go beyond Islam's preservation and turns it into a source of clarity and guidance for Muslims and humanity alike.

# Submission Process

## **Phase 1: Call for Contributors**

Submit a well-drafted abstract which aligns with one of our Areas of Inquiry above (400–600 words) outlining your proposed contribution. Deadline: October 31, 2025

## **Phase 2: Working Groups**

Selected contributors will join sub theme-based focus groups for early ideation and refinement by December 2025. Groups will be assigned a facilitator.

## **Phase 3: Symposium (In-Person) (May 2026)**

Contributors gather for a focused event to share drafts, strengthen collaboration, and hear from esteemed scholars in the field.

## **Phase 4: Final Writing & Editing (May–July 2026)**

Structured feedback, theological review, and editorial support.

## **Phase 5: Publication & Rollout (Aug–Dec 2026)**

Print and digital anthology launch with companion events and featured in our podcast.

# Who Should Contribute?

- **Practitioners and Professionals**
- **Writers, researchers, and essayists**
- **Students and youth leaders seeking to add their perspective**
- **Any community members invested in the theme and motivated to produce a quality work product**