

Welcome & Vision

As-salaamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh,

We are honored that you have expressed interest in contributing to the Institute for Muslim Advancement and Renewal (IMAR) Research Symposium. At IMAR, we believe that ideas shape lives, and that the health of our societies depends on the moral clarity, rigor, and vision of those who think deeply and act courageously. Our mission is to serve as a think tank that produces ideas and solutions rooted in the Islamic tradition, connecting divine guidance to the urgent challenges and pathologies of our age. We translate abstract ideals into accessible products through books, essays, podcasts, community programs, and policy conversations that nourish Muslims and non-Muslims alike with clarity, purpose, and guidance.

This work is more important than ever in a time when research and scholarship are often trapped in ivory towers and disconnected from lived reality. IMAR takes the opposite approach whereby our work is firmly grounded in community, and in the daily struggles and hopes of ordinary people. By rooting ideas in lived experience while holding them up to the highest intellectual standards, we ensure that our work goes more than just being relevant but has the potential to actually be transformative in the kinds of conversations we have and increasing the depth of our intellectual caliber. We aim to build up and deepen the level of conversation within our communities while avoiding elitism, making sure knowledge remains a living force that serves hearts, homes, and societies.

The symposium is at the heart of this mission. It is a forum where ideas are tested, perspectives are sharpened, and communities of thought are formed. The contributions presented here do not end with academic discussion; rather they are seeds that flow into the larger IMAR methodology:

Think Tank → Essays & Books → Podcasts → Khutbahs → Halaqas → Community Programs → Children’s Programs → Public Conversations → Policy & Advocacy → Tangible Change

When you contribute to an IMAR symposium, you are helping ideas travel from the halls of academia into the homes of families, the pulpits of mosques, the desks of policymakers, and the imaginations of children. You are stepping into a tradition that has always recognized knowledge as a form of worship and thought as a pathway to revival. We thank you for lending your mind, your voice, and your pen to this effort. Together, we are building a civilizational horizon where society is nourished, and humanity is reminded of its higher purpose.

Theme of the Symposium

Mental Health: Beyond Industry Barriers and Biases

We live in an age of relentless distraction and mounting anxiety, where countless people search for tranquility yet often find it out of reach. A booming market of mindfulness apps, self-help influencers, and secular therapy promises relief, but too often these solutions deliver only temporary calm. Grounded in materialist assumptions, they treat life's struggles as biochemical disruptions rather than signs meant to direct us back to God.

This year's IMAR Research Symposium invites us to step beyond the industry's barriers and biases and ask deeper questions. Have we mistaken coping for flourishing? In seeking to soothe the body and mind as the highest goal, have we neglected the eternal reality of the soul? By contrast, the Islamic tradition's vision of the self does not stop at survival or pause, rather, it seeks purification, resilience, and return to the Divine.

Our symposium will critically evaluate the unquestioned assumptions of the modern mental health field, particularly as it has evolved into an industry. This is an industry that has been shaped by market forces, funding streams, and professional guilds that often prioritize scalability and profit over holistic well-being. We do not dismiss the positive contributions in the field, but we clarify its limits and propose a richer, God-centered framework for well-being. Unlike state or industry-funded institutions, IMAR is uniquely positioned to ask questions that prioritize the higher purpose of humanity: the flourishing of the soul alongside the healing of the body.

Areas of Inquiry

While all submissions are welcome, IMAR especially encourages perspectives rooted in the Qur'an, Sunnah, and scholarship, as well as fresh, constructive thinking that bridges tradition with today's challenges. Contributors are invited to engage with one or more of the following questions:

1. The Self as Ultimate Reference Point

- To what extent does centering the self as sovereign shape mental well-being today?
- Can mental health outcomes improve by reframing the self as an *amanah* entrusted by God?

2. Distress as Pathology

- What are the risks of medicalizing ordinary struggles like grief, sadness, or fear?
- How do modern systems distinguish between natural emotions and disorders?

3. Therapy and Outsourced Healing

- What role should professional therapy play in Muslim well-being, and where are its limits?
- How do faith, family, and community fill the gaps?

4. Beyond Secular Mindfulness

- What does the popularity of mindfulness or psychedelics reveal about spiritual hunger?
- How do Islamic practices of remembrance compare or diverge?

5. Neutrality and Value-Free Therapy

- How do claims of nonjudgment shape what is considered “healthy”?
- What would it look like to balance compassion with accountability to Divine Truth?

6. The Trauma Lens

- How has trauma discourse shaped identity and resilience?
- How can individuals validate trauma without centering their identities around it?

7. Pharmaceutical Interventions

- What are the strengths and risks of psychiatric medication?
- How might moral and spiritual dimensions of healing be integrated alongside or instead of drugs?

Our Approach

IMAR is not a typical academic center. We work at the crossroads of knowledge and lived faith, where ideas meet real community life. Grounded in the Tarbiya Institute community, we see firsthand how spiritual teachings unfold in families, friendships, institutions, and neighborhoods. This vantage point allows us to surface patterns and challenges that universities or externally-funded think tanks will overlook.

Through our symposia, anthologies, and programs, IMAR does not stop at only critiquing modern frameworks but also points toward a future shaped by divine guidance. Our aim is to show that Islam is not simply adjusted to fit modern life; it is the lens through which we reimagine what true flourishing looks like in homes, communities, and society at large.

Types of Contributions

IMAR symposiums are designed to bring together diverse voices, from scholars and practitioners to students and community members, to engage with a carefully selected theme in ways that are both rigorous and accessible. We welcome contributions that challenge assumptions, offer solutions, and inspire future directions. Below are the forms of contributions we encourage:

1. Research Papers

- Full-length academic-style papers (4,000–7,000 words).
- Grounded in Qur'an, Sunnah, and classical scholarship, while engaging contemporary debates.
- Strong citations, clear argument, and constructive recommendations.

2. Reflective Essays

- Shorter works (2,000–4,000 words).
- Personal yet analytical — drawing on lived experience, community work, or professional practice.
- Accessible to non-specialist audiences while still offering depth.

3. Case Studies & Field Insights

- Analyses of specific programs, institutions, or interventions.
- Highlight lessons learned and practical applications for Muslim communities.
- Useful for practitioners, imams, chaplains, and community leaders.

Contribution Principles

Across all formats, submissions should be:

- Spiritually sound (anchored in Islamic worldview).
- Intellectually rigorous (well-researched, clearly argued, and properly cited).

- Accessible (avoid jargon, speak to broader audiences).
- Constructive (offer insights, solutions, or pathways forward).

Submission Guidelines

We want to make the submission process clear and straightforward while upholding the standards that ensure IMAR symposiums remain spiritually sound, intellectually rigorous, and accessible. Please review the following carefully before submitting your contribution.

Abstract Submission

- Length: 400–600 words
- Content: Clearly state your proposed topic, the question(s) you are addressing, your key argument or insight, and how it relates to the symposium theme and Areas of Inquiry.
- Deadline: October 31, 2025
- Submission Method: Via the online form at www.imar.org.

Full Paper / Contribution

- Length & Format:
 - Research papers: 4,000–7,000 words
 - Essays: 2,000–4,000 words
 - Case studies: 2,500–5,000 words
 - Creative submissions: flexible length (with a 500–1,000 word reflective commentary)
- File Format: Microsoft Word (.docx) or Google Doc (with link access).
- Style: Chicago Manual of Style (footnotes, not endnotes) unless otherwise specified.
- Language: English. Qur’anic and Arabic terms may be used with consistent transliteration.

Citations & Sources

- Use Chicago footnotes for references.
- Qur'anic verses must include surah and ayah numbers and, if translated, use a consistent translation.
- Hadith citations should include source (e.g., Bukhari, Muslim) and be presented consistently.
- Classical works may be cited in translation or Arabic (with transliteration if necessary).

Style & Quality Expectations

We are looking for submissions that show care and effort:

- Typos should be rare! Manuscripts that have clearly not been reviewed will not be accepted.
- Acronyms, terms, and stylistic features must be consistent throughout.
- Writing should be clear, engaging, and accessible while maintaining scholarly rigor.
- Manuscripts should demonstrate a balance of spiritual soundness and intellectual depth.

Submission Materials Checklist

Your submission packet must include:

1. Cover Page with:
 - Title of submission
 - Author's name, contact info, and short bio (150 words)
 - Word count
 - Area(s) of Inquiry addressed
2. Abstract (400–600 words). Include a reflective statement describing what informs your perspective (scholarship, professional experience, community work, or personal journey).

Submission Timeline

- Abstracts Due: October 31, 2025
- Working Groups Begin: ~December 2025
- Symposium (In-Person): May 2026
- Final Manuscripts Due: End of July 2026
- Publication Launch: September 2026

Review & Selection Process

At IMAR, we believe that every submission is part of a larger conversation. Our review process is designed to ensure quality and also to help contributors refine their ideas and produce work that is spiritually sound, intellectually rigorous, and accessible to a wide audience.

Stage 1: Abstract Review

- Abstracts are evaluated by the IMAR Editorial Committee for alignment with the symposium theme and Areas of Inquiry.
- Key criteria include clarity, originality, relevance, and potential for constructive impact.
- Contributors will be notified of acceptance and provided initial feedback.

Stage 2: Working Groups

- Accepted contributors will be placed into subtheme-based working groups facilitated by IMAR staff.
- These groups create space for early peer feedback, idea sharpening, and cross-dialogue.
- Contributors are expected to participate actively and support one another in refining their project.

Stage 3: Symposium Presentation

- Contributors will present draft papers or works at the in-person symposium.

- Each session will include discussion, critique, and collaborative brainstorming.
- The aim is to create dialogue and ensure every participant benefits from the collective exchange.

Stage 4: Theological & Editorial Review

- Before and after the symposium, contributions undergo two complementary layers of review:
 1. Theological Review: to ensure alignment with Qur'an, Sunnah, and core principles of the Islamic tradition.
 2. Editorial Review: to ensure clarity, consistency, accuracy, and accessibility.
- Feedback is constructive and collaborative, with IMAR editors working closely alongside contributors.

Stage 5: Final Submission & Publication

- Contributors will revise their works based on feedback.
- Final drafts will be edited and prepared for inclusion in IMAR's annual anthology.
- Selected works may also be featured elsewhere to extend their impact.

Support & Perks for Contributors

At IMAR, we see symposium contributors as partners in a civilizational project. We are committed to supporting you throughout the process so your ideas can reach their fullest potential and ripple far beyond the event itself.

Editorial & Scholarly Support

- Guided feedback at every stage from abstract to final draft, provided by visiting scholars, IMAR editors and reviewers.
- Theological review to ensure alignment with Qur'an, Sunnah, and scholarship.
- Editorial review for clarity, consistency, and accessibility.

- Development support for first-time contributors or younger voices, to help refine their arguments and style.

Community & Networking

- Connection with a diverse network of scholars, professionals, students, and community leaders.
- Placement into working groups where you engage in dialogue across disciplines and perspectives.
- Opportunities to collaborate on future IMAR projects, anthologies, and public initiatives.
- Ongoing membership in the IMAR Contributor Circle, where symposium alumni continue to exchange ideas and support one another.

Publication & Visibility

- Selected works published in IMAR's annual symposium anthology.
- Features on IMAR platforms: website, newsletters, podcasts, and social media channels.
- Opportunities for expanded publication, including edited volumes, reports, or standalone books and projects developed out of symposium contributions.
- Promotion at IMAR book launches, community events, and conferences.

Professional Growth

- Gain experience presenting and publishing in an environment that values both spiritual soundness and intellectual rigor.
- Build a portfolio of work that balances academic quality with public accessibility.
- Receive mentorship and guidance from established scholars and practitioners.
- Develop skills in presenting complex ideas in ways that resonate across communities.

Long-Term Impact

- Contributions may inspire khutbahs, halaqas, community workshops, and policy conversations, extending your work into real-world impact.
- Symposium discussions feed directly into IMAR’s think-tank ecosystem, ensuring your voice is part of shaping long-term research and strategy.
- Contributors are invited to remain part of IMAR’s broader mission of thought renewal and civilizational flourishing.

Appendix

A. Suggested Reading for Contributors

To help you prepare for the symposium and strengthen your contribution, we recommend the following works. They are not required, but they provide useful grounding in both craft and substance:

- *The Artful Edit* by Susan Bell — A practical guide to revising your own work.
- *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer Adler — Classic methods for reading and thinking critically.
- [Finding Truth in the Age of Fake News: Information Literacy in Islam](#) — Discusses the necessity of structured and methodical digital research, especially in an era of abundant information.
- *Maristāns and Islāmic Psychology: A Historical Model for Modern Implementation* - outlines how the novel methods, tools, and approaches for treating psychological illnesses developed in the maristāns (hospitals) of the Muslim world can be utilised today in formulating a practical implementation of Islāmic psychology.
- [Did Muslims Invent Psychology? \(Part 1\)](#) — Dr. Francesca Bocca-Aldaqr surveys the classical Islamic tradition on the psyche and questions the industry’s amnesia about non-Western paradigms and their more holistic ends.
- [A Critique of Western Psychology \(Part 2\)](#) — Dr. Francesca Bocca-Aldaqr offers a direct evaluation of therapy-culture assumptions from ego-centric models, reductionism, and over-medicalization, contrasted with an Islamic, revelatory anchor.
- [Islamic Psychology Live Q&A \(BT Academy\)](#) — Dr. Francesca Bocca-Aldaqr fields audience questions showing how an Islamic frame reframes “symptoms” as moral-spiritual signals, not just billing codes.
- [How Islamic Psychology Heals Your Mind and Soul](#) — Dr. Francesca Bocca-Aldaqr critiques Western psychology’s fixation on the autonomous self and trauma-centrism; argues for healing that re-orders the heart (qalb) toward God.

- [*Centuries Ahead: Islam's Mental Health Revolution*](#) — Dr. Rania Awaad calls the modern psychiatric system fragmented; contrasts it with the historic maristān model and insists that treating the psyche without the soul is superficial “symptom reduction.”

Style Do's & Don'ts

Do's

- Be consistent: Apply the same rules for acronyms, terminology, and transliteration across the entire manuscript.
- Check citations: Ensure Qur'an, hadith, and scholarly references are accurate and uniform.
- Proofread: Typos should be rare; manuscripts must be carefully revised before submission.
- Write for both head and heart: Balance intellectual depth with spiritual resonance.
- Respect the reader's time: Be concise, structured, and clear.

Don'ts

- Don't submit unreviewed or raw drafts. Submissions with no evidence of revision will not be taken seriously.
- Don't overload with jargon or assume readers share your background knowledge.
- Don't contradict yourself by shifting definitions or terms mid-way.
- Don't reduce faith to theory, rather show how it informs real lives and solutions.