The Reflection project

Working with Muslim bulletin   December 2024

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the December 2024 issue of the Working with Muslim bulletin, compiled for child mental health professionals in the UK by The Reflection Project. A bit more about us:

Our vision is for every Muslim child in the UK to feel heard and healed through timely access to faith sensitive therapy

We help Muslim children and young people access faith- and culture-sensitive therapy by collaborating with community partners to deliver mental health support; and by training therapists in the importance of an appropriately tailored approach

For further details of our projects and team, please see: thereflectionproject.org

EVENTS

Inspirited Minds: Understanding Muslim Mental Health trauma Masters Class

12th January 11.00am - 1.00pm (Zoom)
Join Inspirited Minds for an insightful workshop dedicated to understanding and addressing mental health within the Muslim community. This event aims to break the stigma surrounding mental health, explore Islamic teachings that support emotional well-being, and provide practical tools for individuals to continue the work beyond this workshop.
Key topics that will be covered:
- The definition of mental health
- Understanding potential causes of mental heath
- How to identify when someone is struggling
- Common myths, the impact of stigmatisation and how to reduce this as an Ummah
- The history of Muslim mental health
- Exploring mental, emotional and spiritual health in light of the Quran and Sunnah
- Islamic self-care: beyond the self

Whether you are personally affected by mental health issues or are an advocate for promoting mental well-being in your community, this event provides a compassionate, informative, and empowering space for all. Together, we can take steps toward a healthier, more supportive future where mental health is prioritised and openly discussed within the Muslim community.
Further information: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/understanding-muslim-mental-health-tickets-1111560199479?
aff=erelexpmlt&_gl=1*1yu3tqx*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTYyOTc1NDAxOS4xNzM1NDg0NzQ4*_ga_TQVES5V6SH*MTczNTQ4NDc0OC4xLjAuMTczNTQ4NDc0OC4wLjAuMA..

Inspirited Minds: Understanding Anxiety and Stress - for Young Muslims

26th January 11.30am - 2.30pm

Ascot Community Centre, Star Lane, London E16 4PR

This workshop aims to provide young Muslims with a comprehensive understanding of anxiety and stress, helping them to better navigate the challenges they face in their lives. With a focus on Islamic teachings and modern psychological insights, the session will address the common sources of stress and anxiety faced by Muslim youth today. It will also provide practical tools for managing these challenges, enabling attendees to foster mental well-being and resilience in their day-to-day lives.

Through engaging discussions, expert advice, and interactive activities, participants will explore the following:

- Understanding Anxiety and Stress: What anxiety and stress are, their physiological and emotional impacts, and how they manifest in different aspects of life.
- Islamic Perspectives on Mental Health: Guidance from the Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic teachings on managing emotional struggles, maintaining mental clarity, and seeking peace of mind.
- Common Triggers for Young Muslims: Addressing the unique pressures faced by young Muslims, including academic stress, societal expectations, cultural identity, and navigating modern challenges while holding onto faith.
- Practical Coping Strategies: Evidence-based techniques for managing stress and anxiety, such as mindfulness, breathing exercises, time management, seeking professional help, and integrating Islamic practices like prayer and dhikr.
- Creating a Supportive Community: The importance of open dialogue about mental health within the Muslim community and strategies for creating supportive networks of friends, family, and faith groups.

Further information: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/understanding-anxiety-and-stress-for-young-muslims-tickets-1117956450839?aff=erelexpmlt&_gl=1*1ub50i7*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTYyOTc1NDAxOS4xNzM1NDg0NzQ4*_ga_TQVES5V6SH*MTczNTQ4NDc0OC4xLjAuMTczNTQ4NDc0OC4wLjAuMA...

Inspirited Minds: Understanding Trauma Informed Care for Muslims

9th February 10.20 - 1.30pm (online)

This event aims to provide professionals, educators, family members and community leaders with a deeper understanding of trauma-informed care, with a focus on its application to the Muslim community. It is **suitable for 18+ adults and over only**. The goal is to equip attendees with culturally sensitive approaches to better support those who may be experiencing or recovering from trauma, particularly in the contexts that impact Muslims most.

Trauma-informed care emphasises understanding, recognising and responding to the effects of all types of trauma, including physical, emotional, and psychological. This event will

explore the intersections of trauma and the unique cultural, religious, and social aspects of the Muslim community, offering practical strategies to improve care and support.

Key topics that will be covered:
- Introduction to Trauma Informed Care
- Understanding trauma for Muslims including barriers, and approach
- Cultural and religious competency as professionals
- Practical approaches for supporting Muslims experiencing trauma and recovery
- Building collaborative networks and how we can support one another

*please note, this is not Trauma Informed Care training, it is an approach to understanding trauma informed care for Muslims specifically.

This training provides an opportunity for those working with Muslim populations to improve their practice, deepen their understanding, fostering a more inclusive, empathetic, and effective approach to trauma recovery.

Further information: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/understanding-trauma-informed-care-for-muslims-tickets-1111483901269?aff=erelexpmlt&_gl=1*1runnk4*_up*MQ..*_ga*MTYyOTc1NDAxOS4xNzM1NDg0NzQ4*_ga_TQVES5V6SH*MTczNTQ4NDc0OC4xLjAuMTczNTQ4NDc0OC4wLjAuMA..

RESOURCES

Islamophobia Awareness Month Resources (Dec 2024)
Resources compiled by Muslim Mind Collaborative: muslimmindcollaborative.co.uk/islamophobia-awareness-month-iam-resources/

The Muslim Lived Experience Network
A team of NHS Mental Health Lived Experience Practitioners based in London, with personal recovery journeys that inform their clinical and strategic roles. Through the Muslim Lived Experience Network, they address the unique mental health needs of the Muslim community by offering tailored peer support and interventions that prioritize faith. The team, which includes individuals with experiences of Anxiety, Depression, Post-traumatic stress disorder, Eating disorders, Psychosis, and the impacts of Islamophobia and Racism, understands the challenges and barriers to effective support.
"We believe recovery is possible and rooted in the healing granted by Allah, guiding our approach at MLXN."
MLXN offers faith-sensitive peer support, delivered by Muslims for Muslims, to help navigate distress, trauma, and ill health. Through their Muslim Lived Experience model, they empower the community with mental health education, collaborating with experts in Islamic Sciences, psychology, and counselling. They have challenged harmful practices in mainstream mental health services, advocating for culturally relevant, therapeutic care for everyone. From peer support groups and workshops to a community-led blog and faith kits

for mental health wards, MLXN's services are co-produced with the individuals affected — designed, developed, and reviewed by the communities they serve.

Further information about events: www.mlxn.org.uk/

Gulamabbas Lakha Explores How Faith-Based Practices Can Support Mental Health LMH News, University of Oxford (2024)

A true polymath, Gulamabbas Lakha (2014, MPhil Islamic Studies and History) read economics and econometrics as an undergraduate before completing four masters degrees spanning theology, religion, Arabic, history, psychology and neuroscience. While serving as CEO of the investment firm he founded, he is also a DPhil candidate at Oxford's Department of Psychiatry. Gulamabbas explains how he is using his diverse experience to consider how faith-based practices can support treatments for mental health problems, particularly in Muslim and other faith communities.

Full article: https://www.lmh.ox.ac.uk/news/gulamabbas-lakha-explores-how-faith-based-practices-can-support-mental-health

Comparative Review Podcast: How did COVID-19 Impact the Mental health of Muslims compared to non-Muslims?

In a new *Insights* podcast episode, Chris Coates explores how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the mental health of young Muslims in the UK. Miqdad Asaria (Assistant Professor of Health Policy, LSE) and Maaria Mahmood (Director, Muslim Youth Helpline) discuss research on increased anxiety, isolation, and the need for culturally sensitive support. They highlight challenges faced by young Muslims and how mental health services can better cater to their needs. Tune in for valuable insights on addressing mental health concerns within the community.

Podcast: https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/podcasts/young-muslims-covid-and-mental-health/

RESEARCH/ARTICLES (published)

Runnymede Trust Islamophobia Report 2024

The riots in summer 2024 riots in the UK highlighted the growing Islamophobia, fuelled by biased portrayals of Muslims, especially in the context of Gaza. One in three Muslim students experience Islamophobic abuse, Muslims are overrepresented in deprived areas and prisons (18% of the prison population), and are referred to Prevent eight times more than non-Muslims. The report underscores the structural nature of Islamophobia, showing Muslims as 'outsiders' and a societal threat. With structural racism entrenched in UK society, which poses a threat to the solidarity of the society. It calls for a rational conversation and collective anti-racist efforts to eradicate Islamophobia and its pervasive effects.

Full report: https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/islamophobia-the-intensification-of-racism-against-muslim-communities-in-the-uk

Inspirited Minds research report: "An Exploration of Lived Experiences of Religious OCD Within Muslim Communities"

Hamlaoui et al (2024) in Journal of the British Islamic Medical Association (BIMA)

This study explores the lived experiences of Religious OCD (ROCD) among Muslims, capturing the challenges and coping mechanisms of those affected. Through thematic analysis, key themes emerged: struggles with purity through compulsions, black-and-white perceptions of Islam, emotional and physical tolls, isolation due to lack of support, and diverse coping strategies. Participants shared intense obsessions with purity, exhausting rituals, and distorted beliefs about Allah's mercy, often leading to distress and self-doubt. Effective coping included self-compassion, trauma-awareness, and integrated religious-psychological therapy. This research highlights the importance of culturally and spiritually sensitive mental health approaches to support Muslims experiencing ROCD.

Full report: https://inspiritedminds.org.uk/mental-health/research/rocd-research/

"Reconciling British Values with Professional Identity: The Pursuit of Ontological Security Among Muslim Teachers in England"

Dilek, M. C. (2024) *Religions*, *15*(11), 1353. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15111353

This article aims to investigate how the legal requirement to promote fundamental British values (FBVs) impacts Muslim teachers' professional identity formation, utilising Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with self-identified Muslim teachers, including both male and female individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, employed in secondary schools across England. This study seeks to interpret Muslim teachers' experiences through Anthony Giddens' ontological security theory. Firstly, Muslim teachers expressed pride in being British and their successful integration into society. Secondly, the meaning of Britishness was elucidated by the participants through references to the values described in the current government guidelines on promoting FBVs. Finally, the impact of the obligation to promote FBVs on the professional identity formation of Muslim teachers points to a degree of ambivalence rooted in seeking ontological security. Certain teachers adopted an uncritical stance towards FBV policy, prioritising 'values' within the debate and thereby normalising the discourse surrounding FBVs. In contrast, others engaged in a critical analysis of FBV rhetoric, highlighting its adverse impact on academic discussions and their professional identities. From the perspective of ontological security theory, Muslim teachers are situated in a fragile position; while the majority grapple with ontological insecurity, others exist in a realm between ontological security and insecurity.

Full article: https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/15/11/1353

"A Descriptive Phenomenological Study of Muslim Clients' Experience of Religion during Psychotherapy with Muslim Therapists"

Nakhooda, Muneer M, (2021) MA (Counselling Psychology), Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg (South Africa)

Muslim clients experience psychotherapy in flux. The growing field of Islamic Psychology lacks insight into how Muslim clients experience religion in therapy with Muslim therapists. This study used a phenomenological approach to explore this dynamic, uncovering two key themes: the evolution of religious identity and the role of Islam in the client-therapist relationship. This study reveals two powerful themes: the transformation of religious identity and the role of Islam in the therapeutic bond. Through rich narratives, six insights emerged, from navigating religious crises to reformulating faith, finding well-being, and seeing therapists as both role models and guides. These findings highlight the profound connection between mental health and spirituality, calling for greater focus on how Islamic values and relationships shape healing for Muslim clients in therapy. The findings reveal the transformative role of culturally competent therapy in shaping religious identity among Muslim clients, though they raise critical questions about standardisation. Participants described navigating Marcia's stages of identity development—crisis, exploration, and achievement—through therapy that addressed profound religious conflicts and encouraged self-reflection.

Therapists served as spiritual guides, role models, and facilitators of shared religious contexts, fostering trust and creating safe, non-judgmental spaces. While integrating Islamic principles enriched clients' psychological and spiritual well-being, reliance on therapists' personal religiosity raises important questions about balancing therapeutic neutrality with meaningful religious engagement, pointing to the need for structured, faith-sensitive frameworks in Islamic Psychology.

Full report: www.proquest.com

"Muslim Worldviews: Implications for Helping Professionals Providing Culturally Competent Care"

Bagasra, A. (2020). In A. Bagasra & M. Mackinem (Eds.), *Working with Muslim clients in the helping professions* (pp. 1–22). Information Science Reference/IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-0018-7.ch001

This chapter seeks to provide an overview of traditional and contemporary Muslim worldviews, specifically beliefs and attitudes that may relate to help-seeking and interaction with human services such as counselling, health services, educational systems, and social services. Traditional Islamic beliefs and views, combined with contemporary issues and the experiences of living as a religious minority, can impact successful interaction between members of the Muslim community and service providers. In addition, basic knowledge of Muslim worldviews can aid helping professionals in providing effective, culturally competent care. This chapter focuses on traditional Islamic concepts of health and illness, common lay beliefs that stem from traditional views, attitudes towards treatment, and help-seeking

patterns. The interplay of religiosity, acculturation, gender, family dynamics, and other relevant factors on help-seeking and service utilization are also presented to provide the reader with a holistic perspective of prevalent Muslim worldviews. (PsycInfo Database Record (c) 2021 APA, all rights reserved)

Full chapter: https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2019-50837-001

RESEARCH (in progress)

The IM-Adapted Project: a feasibility study evaluating a mental health programme for young Muslim women

This study by Inspirited Minds in collaboration with the University of Hertfordshire aims to explore the intersection of mental health, faith and cultural identity, and the unique experiences faced by Muslim women in the contemporary society. It will assess the feasibility and impact of a culturally and religiously adapted mental health intervention.

Mental health challenges disproportionately affect minority ethnic groups, with research indicating higher rates of depression among Muslim women. The IM-Adapted study seeks to explore the effectiveness of a faith-based intervention tailored to the needs of young Muslim women. This 6-week program compares group therapy sessions grounded in Islamic principles with standard NHS depression psycho-education groups.

Between March 2024 to February 2026, the study's participants (aged 18-24) will attend weekly sessions at local community centres or mosques in Birmingham and East London. The study will evaluate the intersection of identity, faith, and mental health through pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, as well as a six-month follow-up.

Email: im-adapted@herts.ac.uk or visit: http://www.im-adaptedstudy.co.uk/

HELP CREATE THE NEXT WWM BULLETIN

Please send information about relevant activities in your area, resources of research to contact@reflectionproject.org so that we can share it in the next WWM bulletin (January 2024).

With best wishes,

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GDPR

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