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# INTEGRATING FAITH AND FUNCTION: AN ISLAMIC APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY

## Ayesha Rasheed

PhD in Psychology University of Management and Technology Email: <u>Ayesha.Rasheed@umt.edu.pk</u>

# Dr Mufti Hammadullah khan

Assistant professor Institute of Islamic Perspective and Guidance University of Management and Technology Lahore Pakistan

Email: Hammad.khan@umt.edu.pk

#### Abstract:

In an age where psychological sciences dominate discourses on human behavior, emotion, and cognition, the integration of faith-based perspectives becomes increasingly crucial for holistic understanding. This paper explores "Integrating Faith and Function: An Islamic Approach to Understanding Human Psychology Today", aiming to bridge contemporary psychological theory with Islamic theological and ethical teachings. Modern psychology often emphasizes empirical methods and secular frameworks, which, while effective in certain contexts, may overlook the spiritual and moral dimensions that are central to the human experience, particularly in Islamic traditions. Islam offers a comprehensive worldview that encompasses the physical, emotional, rational, and spiritual aspects of the human being, rooted in the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical Islamic scholarship.

This study critically examines key psychological concepts—such as mental health, motivation, self-concept, emotional regulation, and moral development—through the lens of Islamic teachings. It highlights how foundational Islamic principles like tawheed (oneness of God), nafs (self/soul), fitrah (innate disposition), and taqwa (God-consciousness) contribute to a deeper, more values-based understanding of the human psyche. Drawing from both contemporary psychological research and traditional Islamic sciences, the paper argues for a unified ethical framework that recognizes divine purpose and moral accountability as essential to psychological well-being.

Furthermore, the paper suggests that integrating Islamic teachings with psychological practice not only enriches therapeutic approaches for Muslim clients but also offers universal insights into the nature of human fulfillment, resilience, and behavioral transformation. By presenting case studies, theoretical models, and interdisciplinary analyses, this research emphasizes the importance of culturally and spiritually attuned psychological paradigms. Ultimately, this integration fosters a more inclusive, meaningful, and ethically grounded understanding of human psychology, aligning scientific inquiry with divine guidance.

#### **Keywords:**

This study uses key concepts such as Islamic psychology, faith-based therapy, mental health in Islam, taqwa, nafs, fitrah, Qur'anic psychology, prophetic traditions, moral development, self and soul in Islam, and integrative psychological models to explore the intersection of Islamic teachings and modern psychological science.

#### **Introduction:**

In the contemporary world, psychology has emerged as one of the most influential disciplines in understanding human behavior, mental processes, and emotional well-being. It provides scientific methodologies to investigate how individuals think, feel, act, and interact with their environments. However, mainstream psychological theories have largely developed within secular, Western paradigms that often neglect the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of human existence. As a result, these models, while effective in many contexts, may present a fragmented or incomplete



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picture of the human psyche—particularly for individuals and communities whose worldview is rooted in religious belief. Among such worldviews, Islam offers a profound and holistic framework for understanding human nature, purpose, and transformation. This research, titled "Integrating Faith and Function: An Islamic Approach to Understanding Human Psychology Today," seeks to bridge the gap between contemporary psychological science and Islamic teachings to construct a more comprehensive and ethically grounded perspective of the human being.

Islam views the human being not merely as a biological or cognitive entity but as a multidimensional creation composed of the body (*jism*), intellect ('aql), soul (ruh), and self (nafs). The Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions (Hadith) are replete with insights into human behavior, emotional regulation, spiritual struggle, moral development, and psychological well-being. Concepts such as *fitrah* (the innate disposition toward goodness), nafs (the inner self with its various states), qalb (the heart as the center of spiritual and moral consciousness), and taqwa (God-consciousness) form the cornerstone of the Islamic understanding of human psychology. These constructs, though not typically found in mainstream psychology textbooks, offer deep insight into the motivations, struggles, and transformative potential of human beings.

The need for an Islamic psychological framework becomes even more urgent in multicultural and multi-faith societies where Muslims may find secular psychological theories inadequate or even contradictory to their beliefs. While Western psychology may advocate for personal autonomy, relativism, or purely materialistic interpretations of mental health, Islam emphasizes divine purpose, moral accountability, and spiritual alignment as integral to psychological well-being. This divergence creates a gap in culturally appropriate mental health services for Muslim individuals and communities, leading to resistance, misunderstanding, or disengagement from psychological support systems. It is in this context that integrating faith and function becomes not only an academic pursuit but also a practical necessity for healing and growth.

Historically, Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Razi, and Ibn al-Qayyim made significant contributions to the field of psychology, long before it was institutionalized in the West. Their works addressed complex issues of human motivation, emotional imbalance, personality types, and spiritual development—rooted firmly in Islamic theology and ethics. Al-Ghazali, for instance, emphasized the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) as essential for achieving psychological equilibrium, while Ibn Sina developed early models of cognitive functioning and mental disorders. These scholars did not separate the spiritual from the psychological; rather, they approached human experience as a cohesive whole that includes the mind, heart, and soul in constant interaction. Reviving this classical Islamic heritage within modern psychological discourse offers an alternative model that addresses both spiritual and psychological needs.

Contemporary developments in Islamic psychology are beginning to reclaim this legacy. Modern Muslim psychologists, scholars, and researchers are working to create integrative models that harmonize Islamic epistemology with empirical psychological methods. Pioneers such as Malik Badri, Rasjid Skinner, Abdallah Rothman, and others have emphasized the importance of developing indigenous Islamic paradigms that reflect the spiritual and moral ontology of Islam. These efforts aim to construct a psychology that is not only scientifically valid but also spiritually enriching and theologically coherent. Such a model recognizes that mental health is not merely the absence of disease but the presence of spiritual clarity, moral rectitude, and inner peace—all of which are central themes in the Islamic worldview.

Moreover, integrating Islamic teachings with modern psychology has significant implications for therapeutic practice. It allows Muslim clients to engage with psychological services without



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compromising their religious identity. Therapists trained in both psychological principles and Islamic ethics can offer more culturally and spiritually congruent interventions. Techniques such as mindfulness can be re-contextualized within Islamic practices like *dhikr* (remembrance of God), while cognitive restructuring can align with the Qur'anic principle of positive thinking (*husn al-zann*) and controlling negative thoughts (*waswasa*). Emotional resilience can be fostered through trust in divine wisdom (*tawakkul*), gratitude (*shukr*), and patience (*sabr*). Thus, Islamic psychology is not simply about adding religious terminology to Western theories but about constructing an entirely different framework that begins with faith and ends with ethical transformation.

In addition to individual therapy, this integrative approach has the potential to influence broader educational, social, and policy-making spheres. Islamic schools, community centers, and health institutions can benefit from psychology curricula and mental health initiatives that incorporate Islamic values. It also offers a voice of resistance against the cultural imperialism often inherent in exporting Western psychological models globally without considering local spiritual and moral sensibilities. By grounding psychological understanding in revelation and reason, Muslims can contribute to a more pluralistic and inclusive global psychological discourse.

It is essential, however, to approach this integration with scholarly rigor and ethical caution. Not all traditional religious interpretations may align with contemporary psychological insights, and not all psychological theories are inherently incompatible with faith. A balanced approach requires critical engagement, empirical validation, and openness to interdisciplinary dialogue. Islam encourages the pursuit of knowledge ('ilm) in all its forms, as long as it leads to greater truth, justice, and human well-being. Therefore, Islamic psychology must remain rooted in authentic scriptural sources while also embracing methodological innovations that serve humanity.

In conclusion, the integration of faith and function in understanding human psychology represents a powerful and necessary step toward a more holistic, meaningful, and spiritually aware model of mental health. Islam provides a rich and nuanced understanding of the human being that transcends materialist reductionism and situates the self within a divine framework of purpose, accountability, and growth. By merging the best of modern psychology with the timeless wisdom of the Islamic tradition, we can move toward a psychology that heals not only the mind but also the soul. This paper contributes to this ongoing discourse by offering theoretical insights, historical context, and practical recommendations for a truly integrated Islamic psychological model—one that honors both scientific integrity and spiritual truth.

#### Literature Review

The convergence of psychology and Islamic thought has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent decades, driven by the recognition that modern psychological models often fail to fully address the spiritual and cultural dimensions essential to the Muslim psyche. The literature on Islamic psychology, while still emerging, spans classical Islamic scholarship, contemporary critiques of Western psychology, and modern efforts to develop integrative frameworks. This review synthesizes key scholarly contributions that explore the intersection between Islamic teachings and human psychology, underscoring the need for a more holistic, spiritually grounded psychological paradigm that reflects the ethical and theological worldview of Islam.

Classical Islamic scholarship laid a profound foundation for understanding the human psyche, centuries before the formal advent of Western psychology. Renowned scholars such as Al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Ibn Sina (Avicenna) (d. 1037), and Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) offered rich insights into human behavior, emotional balance, motivation, and personality through deeply spiritual and philosophical lenses. Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences) explores the dynamics of



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the *nafs* (self), *qalb* (heart), and *ruh* (soul), presenting a model of inner transformation through spiritual purification (*tazkiyah*). Ibn Sina's *Kitab al-Nafs* (Book of the Soul) in his *Shifa* series addresses the nature of the soul, faculties of perception, and cognitive processes—anticipating many psychological themes discussed today. Ibn al-Qayyim, in his *Madarij al-Salikin*, described the stages of the soul and the process of moral and spiritual development, emphasizing the transformative power of divine connection. These works reflect a holistic anthropology that integrates the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the human being—significantly contrasting with the compartmentalized approach of many modern psychological theories.

In contrast, modern psychology emerged during the Enlightenment era, with a strong emphasis on empirical science, secularism, and positivism. Foundational figures such as Freud, Skinner, and later cognitive theorists like Beck and Ellis developed models based on observable behavior, unconscious drives, and cognitive distortions, often excluding spiritual or religious considerations. Freud, in particular, viewed religion as an illusion rooted in neurosis, while behaviorists like Skinner dismissed internal states as unmeasurable and irrelevant. Though effective in certain clinical contexts, these models often reduced human beings to mechanistic or material entities, overlooking existential, moral, and transcendent aspects of life. For Muslims, this presented a conflict, as their faith centers on a purposeful life guided by divine will, spiritual accountability, and inner purification.

The emergence of humanistic and existential psychology in the mid-20th century, with figures such as Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and Viktor Frankl, introduced more holistic approaches that resonated more closely with Islamic views. Maslow's hierarchy of needs, for example, culminating in self-actualization, bears similarities to the Islamic journey of *tazkiyah* and *ihsan* (spiritual excellence). Frankl's logotherapy emphasized the importance of meaning and purpose in life, aligning with Islamic teachings that life is a test and a trust from God. Nevertheless, even these approaches stopped short of incorporating a theocentric worldview or divine revelation as a source of psychological insight. For Muslims seeking psychological support, there remained a gap between their lived faith and the secular frameworks available in mainstream therapy.

Contemporary scholars and practitioners have recognized this gap and contributed significantly to developing an Islamic psychological paradigm. Malik Badri, considered the father of Islamic psychology, was one of the earliest critics of the blind imitation of Western psychology in Muslim societies. In his seminal work *The Dilemma of Muslim Psychologists* (1979), he argued for the Islamization of psychology and the need to derive psychological models rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah. He called for a return to the spiritual and moral vision of classical scholars like Al-Ghazali, emphasizing that true mental health must involve proximity to Allah, not just behavioral adjustment. Badri's later works, such as *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study*, explore how Islamic practices like *dhikr* (remembrance), *tawakkul* (trust in God), and *sabr* (patience) foster psychological resilience and emotional regulation.

Building on Badri's foundation, scholars like Rasjid Skinner and Abdallah Rothman have advanced efforts to formalize Islamic psychology as an academic discipline. Skinner proposed that Islamic psychology should not merely be an adaptation of Western models but a distinct discipline grounded in Islamic metaphysics, anthropology, and theology. Rothman, in his work with the International Association of Islamic Psychology (IAIP), advocates for a revival of traditional Islamic psychology while incorporating contemporary therapeutic techniques. His research draws from Sufi traditions and classical sources to create spiritually integrated therapeutic approaches. In his recent writings, Rothman emphasizes that the Islamic model of the psyche—comprising the *nafs*, *qalb*, *ruh*, and



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'aql—offers a more comprehensive understanding of human functioning than the tripartite models of Western psychology.

Empirical research on Islamic-based interventions is also growing, with studies showing the efficacy of integrating religious coping strategies, Qur'anic verses, and Islamic cognitive restructuring in treating anxiety, depression, and trauma among Muslim populations. For example, studies by researchers such as Amer, Hodge, and Abu-Raiya highlight that spiritually adapted therapies improve clinical outcomes and client engagement among Muslim patients. Islamic mindfulness, based on *muraqabah* (self-awareness before God), has been found to reduce stress and increase emotional regulation. Furthermore, Islamic cognitive therapy aligns well with Qur'anic injunctions about thought management, such as avoiding negative assumptions (*su' al-dhann*) and practicing gratitude and positive reframing.

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in developing a fully-fledged Islamic psychology. One major concern is the need for standardized models and academic curricula that integrate both Islamic epistemology and psychological science. Critics caution against superficial integration or eclectic borrowing from religious texts without rigorous hermeneutics. There is also a pressing need for more clinical research, cross-cultural validation, and practitioner training to ensure that Islamic psychology remains both theologically sound and empirically effective. Additionally, the diversity within the Muslim world—spanning cultures, sects, and linguistic traditions—demands a flexible yet authentic framework that respects Islamic universality while addressing local contexts.

Recent interdisciplinary efforts, such as conferences, journals, and university programs in Islamic psychology, are paving the way for further academic consolidation. Institutions like the Cambridge Muslim College, the International Association of Islamic Psychology, and Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University are actively producing research, training scholars, and engaging in international dialogue. Collaborative research between psychologists, theologians, and clinicians is helping bridge gaps and promote methodological rigor. Moreover, the integration of Islamic psychology into areas such as education, family counseling, and trauma care is expanding its relevance and application in real-world contexts.

In summary, the literature clearly reflects a growing recognition that psychology must engage with religion, not as an obstacle but as a vital source of insight, particularly in Muslim societies. The rich intellectual heritage of Islamic scholars offers timeless psychological wisdom, while contemporary efforts to develop an Islamic paradigm of psychology mark a significant shift toward culturally and spiritually aligned mental health practices. As the field continues to evolve, the integration of faith and function promises not only to enhance therapeutic outcomes for Muslims but also to contribute to a more ethically grounded and spiritually aware global psychology.

#### **Research Questions**

- 1. How can core Islamic concepts such as *nafs*, *fitrah*, *taqwa*, and *tawakkul* be integrated into modern psychological models to offer a more holistic understanding of human behavior and mental health?
- 2. What are the practical implications and therapeutic outcomes of incorporating Islamic spiritual principles into psychological counseling and mental health interventions for Muslim individuals?

#### Significance of Research

This research holds significant value as it bridges the gap between contemporary psychological science and Islamic spiritual wisdom, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding human behavior, emotions, and mental health. In a time where many Muslims feel alienated by secular therapeutic models, this study provides culturally and religiously appropriate alternatives grounded



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in Qur'anic principles and Prophetic traditions. It not only revives the rich legacy of classical Islamic psychology but also addresses the growing need for faith-based counseling approaches. By integrating faith and function, this research contributes to more inclusive, ethical, and spiritually aligned psychological practices in both academic and clinical settings.

### Data Analysis:

The data analysis for this research involved both qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine how Islamic concepts influence psychological understanding and therapeutic outcomes. A mixedmethods design was adopted to provide a comprehensive analysis of participants' attitudes, experiences, and perceptions regarding the integration of Islamic teachings in psychological frameworks. Data was collected through structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and case study reviews from a sample of 100 Muslim participants, including clinical psychologists, Islamic scholars, counselors, and clients engaged in faith-based therapy. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression models to determine relationships between key variables such as spiritual practices, emotional well-being, and psychological resilience. The findings indicated a statistically significant positive correlation between the frequency of Islamic practices (such as dhikr, salah, tawakkul, and sabr) and indicators of mental wellness, including reduced anxiety, enhanced emotional regulation, and improved selfesteem. Regression analysis further demonstrated that belief in divine purpose and moral accountability explained a substantial variance in psychological well-being, suggesting that spiritual orientation plays a pivotal role in coping mechanisms and overall mental health among Muslim populations.

In parallel, qualitative data from semi-structured interviews was thematically analyzed to extract patterns related to lived experiences and the effectiveness of Islamically integrated therapy. Thematic coding revealed five dominant themes: (1) perceived inadequacy of secular psychological approaches in addressing spiritual needs, (2) the centrality of *nafs*, *fitrah*, and *taqwa* in understanding self and motivation, (3) the healing role of Qur'anic guidance and prophetic counseling, (4) enhanced trust and satisfaction with therapists who share or understand Islamic values, and (5) the transformative impact of religious rituals on emotional and cognitive states. Participants reported that Islamic frameworks helped them view their psychological struggles not as failures, but as part of a spiritual journey, thus reducing stigma and promoting acceptance and healing.

Moreover, the case studies demonstrated how the incorporation of Islamic narratives, du'a (supplication), and Qur'anic verses provided therapeutic comfort, increased self-awareness, and motivated behavior change. Clients who engaged in therapy sessions that included Islamic references exhibited higher engagement levels, reduced dropout rates, and greater compliance with therapeutic recommendations. Therapists also noted that such integration deepened the client—therapist relationship and enabled more authentic communication. Importantly, data also highlighted the need for trained professionals who are well-versed in both psychology and Islamic theology to ensure theological accuracy and psychological safety.

The data analysis confirms that integrating Islamic principles with psychological practices fosters a more holistic and meaningful therapeutic experience for Muslim clients. It validates the hypothesis that Islamic teachings—when authentically applied—enhance mental health outcomes by addressing not just the cognitive and behavioral dimensions, but also the spiritual and ethical aspects of human experience. The findings advocate for further curriculum development, training programs, and policy initiatives to support the growing field of Islamic psychology and its application in clinical,

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educational, and community contexts. This comprehensive data analysis thus underscores the transformative potential of uniting faith and psychological function in modern therapeutic discourse.

### **Research Methodology:**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic teachings can be integrated into contemporary psychological models. The rationale behind choosing this methodology was to capture not only the measurable effects of faith-based practices on mental health but also the depth of lived experiences and perceptions from those engaging with both psychological and Islamic frameworks. The research sample consisted of 100 participants selected through purposive sampling, including Muslim psychologists, faith-based counselors, Islamic scholars, and clients undergoing therapy. Participants represented diverse cultural backgrounds and were based in urban centers where access to Islamic counseling services was available. Data collection tools included structured questionnaires, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and detailed case studies. The quantitative data focused on variables such as frequency of religious practices, levels of psychological well-being, emotional resilience, and therapy outcomes. Standardized psychological scales, such as the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21) and the Religious Commitment Inventory (RCI-10), were utilized to assess these variables. The data was statistically analyzed using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and regression analysis to determine patterns and relationships.

For the qualitative component, interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's method, allowing the researcher to identify recurring themes related to Islamic concepts of the *nafs* (self), *taqwa* (God-consciousness), *fitrah* (innate nature), and spiritual healing through religious practices. A phenomenological approach was used to interpret participants' subjective experiences, particularly in how they perceived the role of Islamic spirituality in their emotional and mental well-being. Additionally, case study analysis provided practical insights into therapy sessions where Islamic teachings were applied, revealing patterns of enhanced self-regulation, increased hope, and meaningful behavioral change. The research adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and the cultural sensitivity of all participants. By integrating statistical evidence with rich narrative data, this methodology offered a well-rounded exploration of the research questions and reinforced the potential of an Islamic approach in shaping holistic psychological care and understanding in the modern world.

**Data Analysis: SPSS Charts and Tables** 

Table 1: Frequency of Islamic Practices and Psychological Well-being

Islamic Practice Frequency	High Well-being	<b>Moderate Well-being</b>	Low Well-being
Daily	36	14	0
Weekly	20	10	4
Rarely	5	7	4

Table 2: Correlation between Tawakkul (Trust in God) and Stress Levels

Variable	Mean	SD	r-value	Significance (p)
Tawakkul Score	4.2	0.6	-0.72	0.000**
Stress Level	2.9	0.7		

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Table 3: Regression Model – Predictors of Mental Health

Predictors	Beta	t-value	Significance (p)
Salah Frequency	0.31	2.84	0.005**
Qur'anic Reflection	0.42	3.62	0.000**
Spiritual Counseling	0.25	2.12	0.034*

**Table 4: Client Satisfaction with Islamic-integrated Therapy** 

Satisfaction Level	No. of Clients	
Highly Satisfied	42	
Moderately Satisfied	25	
Not Satisfied	8	

SPSS analysis of the collected data provided clear insights into the psychological benefits of integrating Islamic principles into mental health care. Table 1 shows a strong relationship between daily Islamic practice and high levels of well-being. Table 2 indicates a significant negative correlation between tawakkul and stress (r = -0.72, p < 0.01), showing that greater trust in God reduces stress levels. Regression results in Table 3 identify Qur'anic reflection and salah as strong predictors of positive mental health. Lastly, Table 4 reveals that most clients expressed high satisfaction with Islamic-integrated therapy, confirming its value in culturally relevant mental health support.

#### **Findings / Conclusion:**

The findings of this study confirm that Islamic teachings, when integrated into modern psychological frameworks, significantly enhance mental and emotional well-being among Muslim individuals. The SPSS analysis demonstrated that practices such as salah, dhikr, and tawakkul were strongly correlated with lower levels of stress, greater resilience, and increased emotional regulation. Participants reported that therapy aligned with Islamic teachings helped them not only cope with psychological challenges but also find meaning and spiritual strength during hardship. Interviews further revealed that clients felt more understood and respected when therapists incorporated Islamic values into sessions, which improved therapeutic engagement and outcomes. Therapists, too, acknowledged the transformative effect of Islamic concepts on their clients' self-perception, behavior, and long-term healing. Moreover, the regression analysis affirmed the role of Qur'anic reflection and consistent religious practices as significant predictors of positive psychological health. These results validate the hypothesis that a spiritually grounded, culturally sensitive psychological model is essential for Muslim populations. This research therefore highlights the urgent need for the development and institutionalization of Islamic psychology as both a theoretical discipline and a clinical practice, offering a holistic, ethical, and spiritually enriching alternative to conventional psychological paradigms.

#### **Futuristic Approach:**

Looking ahead, the field of Islamic psychology must advance through structured academic programs, international research collaborations, and integration into public mental health policies. Future research should explore neuropsychological effects of Islamic practices, develop standardized therapeutic models based on Qur'anic and Prophetic guidance, and train counselors in faith-sensitive approaches. Digital platforms and mobile mental health tools grounded in Islamic values can also play a transformative role. By merging classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary scientific



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methodologies, Islamic psychology will evolve into a globally recognized discipline that not only serves Muslims but contributes to a universal, holistic understanding of human mental and spiritual wellness.

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