

Research Topics & Ideas: Mental Health

About this document

This PDF contains 50 **mental health research topics** for dissertations and theses, organized into 10 areas of mental health, from access, stigma and help-seeking to youth and adolescent mental health. Each topic is written as a researchable question and linked to a completed dissertation (2022–2026, 28 universities), so you can see how it was studied in practice. Use it to shortlist mental health dissertation topics and thesis ideas, then narrow one down to your own population, setting and timeframe.

By [Derek Jansen](#) (MBA) · Reviewed by [Eunice Rautenbach](#) (DTech) · Grad Coach · October 2026

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Access, stigma and help-seeking

1. Can a culturally tailored program shift stigma inside an immigrant community?

See it in a real dissertation: [Breaking Barriers: Establishing a Culturally Tailored Mental Health Awareness Program to Combat Stigma in the Immigrant Community](#) · Adebisi Ayodele · Fort Hays State University · 2025

2. Does reducing stigma actually increase help-seeking, or only willingness to talk?

See it in a real dissertation: [Exploring the Connection Between Mental Health Stigma, Social-Emotional Risk, and Help-Seeking Behaviors Among High School Students](#) · Dorie Ross · University of South Florida · 2025

3. What keeps East Asian students from seeking help their campus already offers?

See it in a real dissertation: [Mental Health Stigma and Help-Seeking Behaviors Among Eastern Asian/Eastern Asian American College Students and Their Parents: A Mix-Method and Art Therapy Intervention Study](#) · Carmen Tham · Dominican University of California · 2024

4. How does cultural stigma change what people believe mental illness is?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Influence of Cultural Stigma on Perceptions of Mental Illness](#) · Rakshitha Mohankumar · San Jose State University · 2022

5. Did expanding school Medicaid put more children in front of a clinician?

See it in a real dissertation: [School Medicaid Expansion: Examining Child Access to Mental Health Services](#) · Caroline Hope Kelly · University of Chicago · 2026

Depression, anxiety and treatment outcomes

6. How do you tell whether an antidepressant is working, and on whose measure?

See it in a real dissertation: [Measuring The Effectiveness of Antidepressant Treatment By Implementing Beck's Depression Inventory \(BDI\)](#) · Azeem Anjum · University of San Diego · 2023

7. Can a gamified therapy hold someone with anxiety long enough to help?

See it in a real dissertation: [Exploring digitally gamified therapies for anxiety](#) · Amrit Patnaik · Northeastern University · 2022

8. What does a recovery measure capture that a symptom score does not?

See it in a real dissertation: [Outcomes of the Implementation of the Mental Health Recovery Measure in the DeKalb Community Service Board Population](#) · Sharon H. Davis · Georgia State University · 2022

9. Do antidepressants restore the ability to feel pleasure, or only lift mood?

See it in a real dissertation: [Anhedonia in depression: the effects of conventional antidepressants and ketamine on reward processing](#) · Chloe Wigg · University of Oxford · 2026

10. How does what a patient believes about their illness feed their depression?

See it in a real dissertation: [Illness Perception, Depression, and Anxiety Among Middle-Aged Adults with End-Stage Chronic Kidney Disease](#) · Zioleyda Soto · Walden University · 2026

Digital mental health and telehealth

11. Should an automated system ever judge whether a patient is being truthful?

See it in a real dissertation: [An Exploratory Analysis of Automated Deception Detection for Mental Health Applications](#) · Sayde Leya King · University of South Florida · 2025

12. What happens in the first ten minutes of a mental health app?

See it in a real dissertation: [The initial user experience of a gamified mental health app](#) · Angill Lynae Oliva · San Jose State University · 2025

13. Does a dual-factor model describe youth wellbeing better than a symptom score?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Dual-Factor Model \(DFM\) of Mental Health Among Appalachian Youth](#) · Mawyah Adel Bashatah · West Virginia University · 2026

14. Can a conversational agent reach people the mental health system misses?

See it in a real dissertation: [Co-design and evaluation of a smartphone-based mental health promotion and anti-stigma embodied conversational agent for church-affiliated Black adults](#) · Teresa K. O'Leary · Northeastern University · 2023

15. What did clinicians lose when therapy moved onto a screen overnight?

See it in a real dissertation: [Voices from the Frontline: Mental Health Clinicians' Experiences and Attitudes Toward Telehealth Modalities](#) · Daisy Ann Auzenne · Walden University · 2026

Faith, culture and community support

16. Where do religious concepts belong in a personalized mental health care plan?

See it in a real dissertation: [Clarifying the place of religious concepts and practices in formulating and delivering personalised mental health care for depression in the UK Muslim population](#) · G Lakha · University of Oxford · 2025

17. Can a church become a route into mental health care rather than around it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Increasing Mental Health Literacy in the Black Church](#) · Jonathan Allotey · University of San Diego · 2022

18. Why is mental health care met with suspicion in a community that has reason for it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Mental Health, Suspicion, and Care in a Peruvian Community](#) · Julio Cesar Villa-Palomino · University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill University · 2024

19. Did spiritual fortitude protect anyone through a sustained crisis?

See it in a real dissertation: [Spiritual Fortitude and Mental Health amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) · Hansong Zhang · University of North Texas · 2022

20. What role do faith leaders already play in mental health, whether or not anyone asked?

See it in a real dissertation: [Black Faith-based Organization Leaders and their Role in Mental Health](#) · Alyssa Te'Rese Green · Walden University · 2026

Forensic and justice-involved populations

21. How do police officers want to be offered mental health support?

See it in a real dissertation: [Understanding Law Enforcement Mental Health Communication and Police Officers' Mental Health Support Preferences: A Grounded Theory Study](#) · Erin S. Craw · Chapman University · 2022

22. How does mental illness vary across custody levels in a prison system?

See it in a real dissertation: [Mental Health in Prisons: Examining Variations in Disorders Across Custody Levels](#) · Ariel Bysiek · Portland State University · 2025

23. Can restorative justice repair harm inside a healthcare team?

See it in a real dissertation: [When "First, Do No Harm" Fails: A Restorative Justice Approach to Workgroup Harms in Healthcare](#) · Pedro Flores · University of San Diego · 2022

24. How much does expert witness evidence sway a court on mental health?

See it in a real dissertation: [Mental Health in the Criminal Justice System: Investigating the Impact of Expert Witness Information in Court, and Perceived Barriers to Support in Prisons](#) · Georgia Danielle Butcher · University of East Anglia · 2025

25. What did treatment inside prison look like to the people who received it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Perceptions of Former Inmates' Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment Received During Incarceration](#) · Garla Kathleen Snapp-Hart · Walden University · 2026

Maternal and perinatal mental health

26. How do mothers in carceral settings make meaning of their situation?

See it in a real dissertation: [Relational Spirituality and Maternal Coping in Carceral Contexts: A Participatory Action Study of Meaning-Making and Mental Health Among Formerly Incarcerated Mothers](#) · Jessica Peters · City College of New York · 2026

27. Which co-occurring conditions turn up in maternal mortality reviews?

See it in a real dissertation: [Examination of Maternal Mortality, Mental Health Conditions, and Co-Occurring Factors](#) · Laura Eileen Skaarer · Walden University · 2026

28. What does postpartum depression look like where the services assume it does not exist?

See it in a real dissertation: [Postpartum depression in Jamaica: Exploring the lived experiences](#) · Shakeyrah Elmore · University of Louisville · 2023

29. Which circumstances around a birth actually predict postpartum depression?

See it in a real dissertation: [Birth Matters: Examining Contextual Risk and Protective Factors for Maternal Postpartum Depression](#) · Lameya Ahmed · Harvard University · 2023

30. How do immigrant mothers understand perinatal depression when it is screened for?

See it in a real dissertation: [Perceptions of Perinatal Depression Among Immigrant Mothers](#) · Silvia E Arabia · San Jose State University · 2025

Substance use and co-occurring conditions

31. Which social determinants sit underneath a substance use disorder diagnosis?

See it in a real dissertation: [Evaluating The Association Between Social Determinants Of Health And Substance Use Disorder In A New York State Mental Health Population](#) · M M J Sadiq · University at Albany, State University of New York · 2023

32. What do first responders assume about the people they carry, and what does it cost them?

See it in a real dissertation: [First Responders' Assumptions: An Exploration of Emergency Medical Technicians' Secondary Traumatic Stress and Perceptions of Substance Users](#) · Glenn Noble · West Virginia University · 2022

33. What does stigma by association do to a family nobody is treating?

See it in a real dissertation: [Courtesy Stigma and Mental Health: Exploring the Lived Experiences of the Mothers of Registered Sex Offenders](#) · Kimberly Ingold · Illinois State University · 2024

34. Should a substance use clinic screen for childhood adversity?

See it in a real dissertation: [Empowering Recovery: Implementing ACE Screenings to Enhance Care for Patients with Substance Use Disorders](#) · Joshua Wolf · University of San Diego · 2026

35. What does a group program add to early substance use recovery?

See it in a real dissertation: [Development and Implementation of Occupational Therapy Group Protocols for Individuals in Recovery for Substance Use Disorder: Considering Social Determinants of Health and Occupational Areas of Need](#) · Samantha Jane Windisch · West Virginia University · 2024

Trauma, PTSD and displacement

36. What predicts whether a veteran with PTSD discloses at all?

See it in a real dissertation: [Shame, Resilience, and Disclosure Predictors of Mental Health Seeking in Male Veterans With PTSD and Military Sexual Trauma](#) · Neftali Melendez · Walden University · 2026

37. How does structural vulnerability reach an infant's mental health?

See it in a real dissertation: [Structural Vulnerability and Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health: Community-Based Supports for Immigrants and Refugee Caregivers](#) · Mansi Lakhyani · University of Denver · 2026

38. What does a mental health crisis response look like without police in it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Crisis Without Cops: Trauma-Informed Mental Health Care for BIPOC Communities](#) · Amanda Carson · University of San Diego · 2025

39. Does childhood medical trauma follow someone into early adulthood?

See it in a real dissertation: [Childhood Medical Trauma and Its Effect on Emerging Adult Mental Health Outcomes](#) · Emma Ceres · University of Rhode Island · 2022

40. How do you build mental health literacy in a community with its own vocabulary for distress?

See it in a real dissertation: [Increasing Mental Health Literacy in an African Immigrant Community in the United States](#) · Dominic Nchamukong · Fort Hays State University · 2026

Workforce wellbeing and burnout

41. Does a mindfulness program reduce clinician burnout or reframe it?

See it in a real dissertation: [Staff Education on Mindfulness-Based Intervention to Reduce Burnout Among Mental Health Clinicians](#) · Abosede Oyeronke Oyedele · Walden University · 2026

42. What is compassion fatigue costing the people who treat it in others?

See it in a real dissertation: [Compassion Fatigue and the Mental Health Professional: Improving Quality of Life in the Workplace](#) · Diane Wahne · Fort Hays State University · 2025

43. What happens to an employee after they disclose a mental health condition?

See it in a real dissertation: [The Relationship Between Mental Health Disclosures, Employee Sentiments and Turnover Intention in the Workplace](#) · Steve Winkel · University of Rhode Island · 2025

44. How do emergency department staff carry what the shift leaves behind?

See it in a real dissertation: [Balancing Care and Chaos: A Phenomenological Study on the Emotional and Mental Health Challenges of Emergency Department Nurses](#) · Shantilee Green · Nova Southeastern University · 2026

45. Does reflective practice hold clinicians together through a sustained crisis?

See it in a real dissertation: [Exploring community mental health clinicians lived experiences of reflective practice during a pandemic using an interpretative phenomenological analysis](#) · Rachel Pybus · University of the West of England · 2023

Youth and adolescent mental health

46. Why do parents disengage from a child's mental health service?

See it in a real dissertation: [Parental Participation and Engagement in North Carolina Medicaid Enhanced Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents](#) · Jonathan Andrew Traylor · Walden University · 2026

47. How much screen media use is a mental health signal rather than a cause?

See it in a real dissertation: [Screen Media Use Among Children and Adolescents – Applications of Supervised and Unsupervised Machine Learning and Sentiment Analysis](#) · Yifan Zhang · West Virginia University · 2022

48. What trends show up in Black high school students' mental health that services miss?

See it in a real dissertation: [Mental Health Trends Among African American High School Students](#) · Alexis Heard · Columbus State University · 2025

49. What does an unmet youth mental health need look like at neighborhood level?

See it in a real dissertation: [Addressing the Unmet Mental Health Crisis of Youth in West Englewood](#) · Joallyn Porter · Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences · 2025

50. How much does a coach's language shape a young athlete's mental health?

See it in a real dissertation: [Impact of Coach Behavior and Language on Child and Adolescent Mental Health](#) · Sosna Daria · San Francisco State University · 2022

How to turn a topic into your research question

A topic is a starting point, not something you can research yet. These four steps take you from a topic on this list to a focused question you can actually answer.

- 1. Shortlist three, not one.** Pick three topics from this list that genuinely interest you and fit the access you have to people and data.

Recommended reading: [How to find and choose a dissertation topic](#)

- 2. Read the dissertation behind each one.** Its literature review and its "recommendations for future research" section show you what is already known and what is still open.

Recommended reading: [How to find a research gap](#)

- 3. Narrow it to your setting.** Name one population, one setting and one thing you will measure or explore. That turns a broad topic into a question you can finish.

Recommended reading: [How to write a research question](#)

- 4. Line up your aims, objectives and questions.** Your committee will check that they agree.

Recommended reading: [Research aims, objectives and questions](#)

Work through these once and you will have a focused question rather than a broad topic, which is what the rest of your proposal is built on.