

My interest in psychology during the early stages of my life was sparked by the divorce of my parents. Trying to decipher my parents' perplexing emotions and behaviors helped me to better comprehend human conduct and the psychological forces that shape it. Years later, I began observing the behavior of individuals in my daily life. Shifting between America, Saudi Arabia and Wales growing up enabled me to unravel other cultures and discover why some things were acceptable in one place but not in another. One difference was attitudes towards mental health, as I was raised in an Arab background where treatment for mental illnesses was stigmatized. This stigma compelled me to further uncover the depths of psychology. After being helped by a psychologist myself in my teens, I desired to assist individuals who share my background by eradicating the shame linked to mental health issues in my culture. My aim is to specialize in behavioral psychology, as it is a field linked to my personal experiences. As I began to research this field of psychology, I discovered John Watson's behaviorism theory, intrigued specifically by The Little Albert experiment. This experiment demonstrated how humans could be conditioned for certain emotional responses which led me to conclude that the result of how humans behave is due to their environment and surroundings. I linked this with my prior knowledge of the nature vs nurture debate and aimed to form my own perspectives to these combined theories.

To further pursue my interest in psychology during high school, I had the privilege to study a psychology course at *Yale University*, and further, an introduction to psychology course in a two-week summer residential program at the *University of Cambridge*. During my time away, I developed a sense of resilience and independence in the new environments, and further acquired an understanding of psychology, all of which will greatly benefit me at university. Upon my return, the notion that my high school, along with most schools in Saudi Arabia, did not offer psychology classes compelled me to speak up. Thus, I suggested the idea and persuaded them to include psychology as an elective course. I was ecstatic to learn that psychology was subsequently made an option following my suggestion.

Apart from furthering my understanding of psychology, I also prioritize community. I am active in the student council at my school, where I hold the position of Secretary, after serving as Vice President last year. Being in the student council has taught me how to collaborate with diverse personalities. To help the wider community, I joined the *Saudi Youth Ambassador Group*, the largest youth volunteer organization in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, I worked as a researcher at *GenZ*, an organization spreading awareness of crucial global issues, where I investigated psychology-related topics like the psychological impact of quarantine on teenagers. Also, I was a participant in a *Model United Nations*, and two debate teams, where I won numerous best debater prizes. These activities helped me to develop skills such as communication, research, development and presentation of arguments, and critical thinking. Finally, I enrolled in Jujitsu, which emphasizes focus, self-confidence and physical health, allowing for a holistic approach to well-being.

My objective after university is to return to Saudi Arabia and assist individuals to eliminate the widespread ideology that mental health should be frowned upon. I also aspire to launch a nonprofit psychology organization that would provide free therapy sessions to people of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Whilst studying psychology at university is only the first step, ultimately, I want to work with other professionals to positively contribute to the big riddle of psychology and endeavor to better the world, one mind at a time.