

The Werner Otto Scholarships

A Cooperation between the
Jewish-Arab Center and the
Association of the German Friends
of the University of Haifa

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Robert Bosch Foundation



19 years ago, the German Friends Association initiated the Werner Otto Scholarship Program with the goal to encourage and support talented Arab Women in their ambition to achieve higher education. Our Scholarship Program does not only provide the financial support, which is very much needed, but also serves as an important tool for empowerment. Our scholars, who are studying towards Master's and PhD degrees, will play an important role as academics in the Israeli society, which strengthens the position of Arab women as a whole.



We are very fortunate to work together on this with our partner at the University of Haifa, the Jewish-Arab Center. With its exemplary work in the field of intercultural cooperation, it has gained great recognition also beyond the gates of the university. Together with the German Friends it chooses the most promising applicants and offers support to our scholars in case of any personal or academic problem.

We are proud to see the Werner Otto Family grow every year. By now, we have granted over 190 scholarships already. It is amazing that the women still feel bonded with the program and participate in WO-conferences even years after they received their scholarship. It shows us that we are on the right path.

Although every year brings its unique opportunities, milestones and challenges, this year will be remembered in a special way. Due to the novel coronavirus, currently everyone has to adapt to the new situation in record time. Unfortunately we could not meet our scholarship holders in person, which is always a special highlight for us. It is all the more impressive to hear how well and creatively they deal with the new challenges. During quarantine, many of them have to work and take care of their children or other family members at the same time and still achieve to make progress in their research projects. These strong women can be role models for all of us. I am very excited to meet them as soon as possible.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sonja Lahnstein-Kandel".

Dr. h. c. Sonja Lahnstein-Kandel
Chairwoman
German Friends Association of the University of Haifa

The Werner Otto Scholarship program is a very important project at the University of Haifa. It is a joint unique sponsorship of the Association of German Friends of the University of Haifa and the Jewish-Arab Center, awarded to outstanding Arab women from diverse academic fields and professions.



The JAC believes that aiding and encouraging our students, especially those who face great barriers will increase the social equality and better our society. Each year the top Arab female students at the University of Haifa are chosen to receive this scholarship and it is always a pleasure to get to know and hear their stories as they reach success and break glass ceilings.

This year was not a regular year for us, as the Corona Virus spread. We had to adapt new ways of communication. Just before the epidemic broke, we had the chance to meet this year scholarship recipients and they were very excited to learn they were chosen to be a part of this special program and network. As we gotten to know them, we realized just how outstanding they really are, reaching academic excellence while maintaining households and work. Unfortunately, due to the new health regulations, the main event of the Board of Governors did not take place, so during the quarantine, we contacted those young scholars to hear how they are handling this difficult time.

Although times are challenging, the Werner Otto Scholarship program will always stay as an influential program at our University as it empowers young Arab women and opens up new opportunities for academic collaboration for Jewish and Arab scholars.

The WO network is a significant part of our activities, and we do try to integrate the WO scholarship holders in every event. We are honored to collaborate with them and blessed to have them as part of our Center.

Once again, I want to express my deep gratitude to the German Friends of the University of Haifa for the continuing partnership and support, especially to Mrs. Sonja Lahnstein - Kandel and Ms. Nicola Teuber. Looking forward to continue achieving our shared goals together and improving the lives of our University students as well as others in the State of Israel.

Prof. Adital Ben Ari
Head of the Jewish- Arab center

Tasnim Khatib-Hussein

MA, Department of Psychology

Tasnim is a clinical neuropsychology M.A. student that is pursuing her thesis research at the Social and Affective Neuroscience Lab, under the supervision of Prof. Simone Shamay-Tsoory.

She is interested in studying the mechanism underlying the effects of oxytocin on social behavior. Specifically, she focuses on olfactory pathways and examines their role mediating the effects of oxytocin.

In other words, her project explores if humans are affected by chemical signals of the oxytocinergic system. In contrast with the prevailing belief that oxytocin is not a chemo signal, for the first time, Tasnim's research plans to demonstrate that oxytocin is a putative pheromone.



Dana Bsharat

MA, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

Dana Bsharat is 25 years old and lives with her family in Nazareth.

Last year she started her MA studies in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. Dana's enthusiasm to study the Arabic-Hebrew aspect of bilingualism and to examine behavioral and neural differences between monolingual and bilingual individuals motivated her to continue her academic studies and to join Dr. Karawani's Lab.



Dana's research includes behavioral and physiological testing and aims to compare behavioral and neural performance between Arabic-Hebrew bilinguals and native Hebrew monolingual speakers. The decision of choosing this topic and specifically Arab young adult students as representative of the target population in her study has two rationales: The first is the desire to draw conclusions about the largest minority group in Israel (that she herself belongs to). The second is because examining the extent to which bilingual listeners suffer in non-ideal acoustical situations may be important because the incidence of Arab bilingual students is increasing, and most of them are being taught in

their second language. Therefore this study may have important theoretical, practical and clinical applications.

Saeda Hafi

MA, Department of Clinical Psychology

Saeda is a MA student in Clinical Psychology. Choosing to study psychology has always been her goal, though she had to make a switch after her B.A. and chose to continue her graduate studies in Community Mental Health; a major that got her into the rehabilitation world. A couple of years later, she yearned to get back into the psychotherapy major, and she made her way back to academia in order to fulfill her dream of becoming a professional psychologist. Today, Saeda is about to finish her studies in Clinical Psychology, and she is working on completing her thesis, which addresses the correlation between experiencing traumatic events and reporting psychotic-like experiences in the general population, while examining the moderation effect of the age of exposure to traumatic event and cultural background on the correlation mentioned. Meanwhile, she serves as a research coordinator in Ruppin's Academic Center, in a research that addresses the topic of Arab students' success in higher education, a subject that is close to her heart and interests.



Maisa Abu Salha

MA, Department of Learning Disabilities

Maisa Abu Salha is 24 years old from Golan Heights. She is the youngest in a large family. She received her first degree from the University of Haifa in Human Resources and Geography and Environmental Studies, but in the end she decided to change her field of study and continue to a master's degree in the Program for Learning Disabilities Department. This decision was derived from the fact that she wasn't exposed to this field of study before and when it happened she saw herself as one of the professionals in the field of learning disabilities in the Arab society. Hence, she had enrolled in the Program of Learning Disabilities in the Arabic Language which aims at training specialists in research, diagnosis, individual therapy and systemic work in the field. Additionally, Maisa chose to combine her M.A degree with research work (thesis) that focuses on the brain, a research which intrigued her along her first year in the master's degree.



Maisa's thesis is supervised by Prof. Asaid Khateb and will assess the cognitive predictors and neuro-cognitive basis of mental calculation processing in the young students' brain using neuropsychological and ERP measures collected during performing an arithmetic verification paradigm. The study's aim is to figure out which cognitive variables might contribute to individual differences in brain responses as measured by ERPs while the study rationale derived from the fact that ERPs component characteristics are age-related due to developmental changes between childhood and adulthood. Hence, it was reasonable to assume that cognitive processes underlying arithmetical skills in both age-groups might be different.



Haya Onallah

MA, Department of English Literature

Haya is a third year Masters student at the department of English Literature. She is currently writing her thesis which delves into the field of jurisprudential drama, specifically focusing on the role of women before the law. Her body of work includes two Shakespearean problem- plays, alongside a tragedy written by John Webster. In addressing such texts, Haya will examine the inefficacy of the female utterance in patriarchal justice systems. Although her thesis includes texts written in the Early Modern Period, she couldn't help but notice the relevance their content offers to women today, especially to Arab women such as herself. Therefore, similar to her advocacy for women, or any kind of minority which is treated unjustly, Haya is ecstatic to be somewhat of an advocate for these fictional female characters.

In terms of her job, Haya works as an English teacher at Wall-Street English. What she admires about this company is that it offers its services not only to school children, but also to working men and women without any discrimination. In teaching students from different age ranges, her job has taught her the importance of adaptability in the work place. In addition, as their method clearly suggests, the students and the teachers, whether they are Muslim, Christian or Jewish, must only speak English, which allows them to create a welcoming atmosphere where everyone feels united by this international language. In addition to her current job, Haya has worked as an editorial assistant, as a translator and most importantly, she was also been lucky to have worked in assisting blind and visually impaired English majors at the University who have showed her, that despite all the difficulties they face every day, they have always found a way to continue and love their education.

Sabaa Jabali-Serhan

MA, Department of Economics

Sabaa is studying for her M.Sc. in economics, in the joint program of the Technion and the University of Haifa. In 2018, she obtained her B.A. in Economics and Finance at the Max Stern Yezreel Valley College with an average grade of 94 and received an excellent academic achievement scholarship. Last year, Sabaa finished the first year of her master's studies with an average grade of 92.

As an Arab citizen who lives in Israel, she couldn't help but wonder why there is such an enormous difference between the standards of living between Arabs and Jews in Israel. Can the socio-economic gap be reduced? What is the difference between the labor characteristics of Arabs and Jews? And why Arab women are always left behind? To be able to answer these questions and get effective policy tools she needs to gain a historical perspective and understand how society is formed and constructed. That was her main motivation to study economics.

To answer the questions that motivated her in her academic studies, Sabaa focused in her thesis on the difference in the labor decisions between Arab and Jews households by modeling two making decisions processes under the supervision of Prof. (emeritus) Benjamin Bental and Dr. Jacob Schwartz. The main hypothesis is that Arab households follow Stackelberg leader game, where men make their labor decisions first and women follow them. On the other hand, in Jews households, the labor decisions of men and women are made simultaneously. The results of her thesis could help policy makers understand why Arab women's labor participation is far behind that of Jewish women. In the future, Sabaa plans to pursue PhD and continue her research in labor characteristics of Arab and Jews in Israel.



Raneen Srouji

MA, Department of Human Biology

Raneen is a M.Sc. student at the Human Biology Department, Faculty of Natural Science at the University. She chose biology because she has always been interested in its researches. Raneen is conducting her research at the Lab of Dr. Liza Barki-Herrington, Her research deals with the COX-2 enzyme and its



effect on cell proliferation, where she is searching for the exact mechanism that COX-2 uses to cause certain types of cancers, such as colorectal cancer. Raneen has successfully completed her courses last year with an upper division.

Her mentor, Dr. Liza Barki Herrington, chose her to participate at the ILANIT/FISEB conference that took place in Eilat. During the conference, Raneen presented a poster to a wide audience of scientists and students. Raneen has completed her B.Sc. in pharmacy science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2015. She works as a pharmacist in a part time job to fund her college education. In addition, during the last semester, she worked as a biochemistry lab tutor for B.Sc students in biology at the University.

Raneen's long term goal is to continue contributing to the medical science international knowledge. She wants to find a new way to battle cancer based on her theoretical and practical experiences.

Reem Sliman

MA, School of Social Work

Reem is a mother of three children, a social worker and a MA student in the school of Social Work at University of Haifa. She is a social worker therapist, in her job she provides substance use prevention and intervention services for teenagers and young adults (13–24 years). Reem also instructs parents to prevent and treat target issues, primarily use of psychoactive substances (drugs and alcohol) and gambling.



Her research focuses on an extremely important topic with relevance for both practice and theory: the mechanism that connects high school risk factors (namely, substance use and violence victimization) and long-term outcomes in adulthood. A prior research that focused on the short-term consequences of high school risk factors has shown an association with depression and low self-esteem in adulthood. However, little is known about what connects these risk factors and negative outcomes in adulthood. Reem's study examines the hypothesis that violence victimization and substance use contribute to a negative subjective experience of childhood. This may cause depression and low self-esteem in adulthood (a mediation model). This model is sophisticated and exceptional in terms of its potential contributions to theory and practice as well as innovative approach.

Samaher Taha

PhD, Department of Learning Disabilities

Samaher Taha is married and has a son and a daughter. She is a PhD student at the University of Haifa. During her M.A thesis, she tried to investigate the risk factors in using psychoactive substances among Arab adolescence in Israel. Currently, her PhD research focuses on investigating the role of hot and cool executive functions, social anxiety, and familial factors on the development of anti-social personality among Israeli adolescents.

In addition, she had published different articles in intentional and local journals, some of them are considered as referred journals.

During her professional career, Samaher participated in different volunteer projects within her community. In one project, she managed an intervention program in an elementary school in Dear Hanna village, which aimed to raise the awareness among parents and educators about learning disabilities. Within this project she invited different specialists for giving presentations and activities to the parents and educators about learning disabilities. Also, for students from this school with low economic resources, Samaher arranged professional diagnosis. Within another project, she worked with teenage girls by managing workshops that aimed to prepare them for becoming aware of their sexual development and how to deal with this complicated period in life.

It is important to mention that in the last five years, she had a rehabilitation position in the authority for prisoners' rehabilitation in the north district and recently she was promoted to supervisor position in the authority.



Nagham Baransi

PhD, Department of Counseling and Human Development

Nagham is a PhD student at the Department of Counseling and Human Development. Her PhD research focuses on cognitive and emotional characteristics and parental representations of Arab parents of children with ASD and their contribution to the effectiveness of short-term intervention on mindset change and promotion of post-traumatic growth. She is conducting it under the supervision of Professor Miri Scharf, head of her department.



Naghm was born in Reineh, a village near Nazareth. She completed her secondary education in Nazareth, and pursued higher education at Tel-Aviv University, where she graduated with a B.A. in Social Work. In addition to that, Nagham also completed a B.A. degree at Communication Sciences and Disorders, at the University of Haifa, and an M.A. degree with high honors, from the Interdisciplinary Child Development, University of Haifa.

As parts of her academic activities, Nagham published, as a co-author, two papers in accredited scientific journals in the field of Autism research. She presented her work at several international conferences in Israel and abroad.

In addition to her academic studies, for the last seventeen years she has served as a social worker and a speech-language pathologist working with Arab children and parents.

Naghm is mostly interested in expanding her knowledge regarding coping mechanisms of parents of children who are diagnosed with autism, and in designing and implementing intervention for reducing parents' stress and promote their growth.

Isra Sadiya

PhD, Department of Human Biology

Isra completed her BSc in Medical Laboratory Sciences at the Technion, she also graduated with an MSc in Human Biology from the Kosloff group in 2017 and continued to a PhD in the Kosloff lab. In her research, she uses computational and experimental approaches to decipher the determinants of G-protein-RGS interaction specificity. Isra is interested in how protein-protein interactions control cellular communication in health and disease. In particular, she studies the interactions of the ubiquitous molecular switches heterotrimeric G-proteins with their negative regulators, RGS proteins – as a model system to study interaction specificity between large protein families. In her research, she seeks to understand which amino acids in G-proteins modulate their interactions with RGS proteins, shedding lights on these biologically-important interactions in healthy individuals, and their roles in diseases such as cancer, mental illnesses etc, and hopefully enable us to design novel drugs targeting these signaling cascades.

Beside her research, she has also participated in a Science Mentoring Project that encourages youth to study science by mentoring and to make science education accessible to them. In addition, she hosts students from co-existence projects to promote social interactions and sharing community activities. Isra believes this is how we can create a bridge between the different groups of the Israeli society. That will lead to really



get to know each other, understand each other's opinions and thoughts, to be part of the same society, rather than two separate groups in this country.

Quamar Mishirqi Assad

PhD, Law Faculty

Quamar received a LLM degree from the University of Haifa in September 2005. Her thesis was on “The Crime of Infanticide: A Critical Evaluation of Current Legislation and Case Law and a Proposal for a More Appropriate Understanding of the Offence”.

In March 2016, she began her PhD studies at University of Haifa, Law Faculty, where she is conducting a research titled “The Role of the Military Commander in Shaping of the Legal Geography and its Influence on the Palestinian People in the West Bank”. Her supervisor is Alexander (Sandy) Kedar, PhD.

Quamar founded and directed the Legal Department of Rabbis for Human Rights and currently she is the Co-founder of “Haqel: Jews and Arabs in Defense of Human Rights” and a director of a legal project at Haqel working in the occupied territories.



Social Activities in the Network- Werner Otto Scholarship

At the beginning of the year, the Jewish-Arab Center held a unique conference with the WO scholarship holders. The conference was set to give the scholars a stage where they can talk about their life and academic path. These outstanding Arab scholars spoke to a room full of high school pupils who are supposed to finish their studies and choose a life path as adults soon. It was an exceptional opportunity to expose the pupils to the academic world and its significance and merits. Every scholarship holder elaborated about her life and academic success, and through their stories, the pupils learned about the departments and faculties at the University. Inspired with what they heard, the pupils started to ask questions about the education programs at the University. This day enabled the pupils to gaze at the future and see what could be if they chose to explore the academic track.





Network Meetings

Throughout this year, right before the COVID 19 pandemic spread and the quarantine started, Prof. Ben Ari had a special meeting with this year's WO scholarship holders. In this meeting the WO recipients introduced themselves and talked about their life and academic path, each one elaborated on her study and its purpose and significance. After the introduction, Prof. Ben Ari talked about the center, its activities and the WO network. The scholars were very grateful to be chosen as one of the outstanding Arab women in the academia.

Unfortunately, just before the Board of Governors, the COVID 19 expanded and they couldn't participate in the event, so we contacted them to see how they are doing in this time. The scholars were very touched to hear from us and wanted to send their extended gratitude to the German Friends Association.

Updates from the 2020 WO Scholarship Holders during the Epidemic

This year was very challenging, as the COVID 19 pandemic looms, lives are changing and new ways of communicating are created. As it was not possible to meet the new WO scholarship recipients in the Board of Governors, the JAC contacted the 2020 scholarship holders to find out how they are handling the current situation. Each belonging to a different academic field, the scholars described their lives and academic status. It has not been an easy time for them, being in quarantine for an extended period, but they do focus on the positive. Some were able to make rapid progress in their research, some were slowed down and still tried to carry on their work. The given health restrictions mainly affected those who needed to attend the lab or interview respondents and forced them to concentrate on other parts of the research. As for their personal life and professional work, they were also influenced a lot by the ongoing epidemic; schools were closed as well as leisurely activities and various workplaces had to form new ways of running. Although they are faced with a new reality, these outstanding women manage to juggle work, studies and a family life, while looking to the future with inspiration and hope.



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