**Sonal Johal**

The University of Southern Mississippi, Department of Psychology

Email: [sonal.johal@usm.edu](mailto:sonal.johal@usm.edu) Address:

118 College Dr.

Hattiesburg, MS 29406

**Education**

PhD University of Southern Mississippi August 2023 - Present

Clinical Psychology

MS Mississippi College, December August 2020 – December 2022

Mental Health Counseling

BA University of Michigan – Dearborn September 2006 – August 2008

Economics, Graduation with distinction, Honors

**Honors & Awards**

Graduate Competitive Travel Award, Spring 2025

Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Student Research Symposium, 2024 2nd Place Poster Presentation

Magnolia Grant Scholar 2021-2022

Jackson State University 2021 Psychology Research Symposium Most Innovative Research Idea

Chi Sigma Iota, International Honor Society, 2021 – present

Omicron Delta Epsilon, International Honor Society, 2008

**Abstract Publications**

Turner, E., **Johal, S**., Marshall, G., Herrington, B., Criddle, J., Reddy, A., Sukumaran, A., Al

Hmada, Y., Shiflett, J., & Karlson, C. (2022). QOL-01. Inflammatory biomarkers and

psychological sequela in pediatric brain tumor survivors. *Neuro-Oncology, 24*(1), il33.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/neuonc/noac079.484>

**Manuscript Publications**

Renna, M. E., Wilbourne, F. N., **Johal, S**., Fergerson, A. K., Behringer, K. F., Brandner, C. F., Stavres, J., & Graybeal, A. J. (2025). Stress and Anxiety Are Associated with Increased Metabolic Syndrome Risk Among Young Adults Living in the Deep South. Healthcare, 13(4), 359. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13040359>

Ogbaselase-Beck, F. A., Williams-Kirkwood, W., **Johal, S**., Bailey, A., Jackson, E., Davis, D., Karlson, C. W.  (2024). Medical and Socioeconomic Risk Factors for Academic and Psychological Outcomes in Pediatric Sickle Cell Disease. *Clinical Pediatrics*. [https://doi.org/10.1177/00099228241306233](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdoi.org%2F10.1177%2F00099228241306233&data=05%7C02%7Csonal.johal%40usm.edu%7C4ec33f78b8de4d1cd8c808dd30c1db91%7C7f3da4be2722432ebfa764080d1eb1dc%7C0%7C0%7C638720331397956025%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=vBCnogFgLHYzI7E6TEoxb%2BLFFDXnuHmnk9cmEYWZfQ4%3D&reserved=0)

Rygh, L., **Johal, S**., Johnson, H., & Karlson, C. W. (2023). Virtual Reality for Pediatric Oncology Port-A-Cath Access: A Pilot Effectiveness Study. *Journal of pediatric hematology/oncology nursing*, *40*(6), 379–385. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27527530221147875>

**Manuscripts in Preparation**

**Johal, S.K**., Shrout, M.R., Madison, A.A., Wilson, S.J., Alfano, C.M., Povoski, S.P., Lipari, A.M., Agnese, D.M., Carson III, W.E., Kiecolt-Glaser, J.K., & Renna, M.E. Early life trauma and adversity is associated with poorer physical health throughout breast cancer diagnosis and survivorship.

**Oral Presentations**

Dhruve, D., **Johal, S**., & Karlson, C.W. (2022, September). *Perceived Quality of Peer Relations Decreases Risk for Internalizing Symptoms in Pediatric Oncology/Hematology Patients With Poor Sleep Quality.* Oral presentation at the Mississippi Psychological Association,Hattiesburg, MS.

**Johal, S**., Barajas, K., Shields, M.L., Patel, R., & Karlson, C.W. (2020, September). *Trauma and* *Emotional Correlates of Pediatric Headache in Mississippi*. Virtual oral presentation at the Mississippi Psychological Association.

**Poster Presentations**

**Johal, S.K**., Shrout, M.R., Madison, A.A., Wilson, S.J., & Renna, M.E. (2025, March). *Early life trauma and adversity is associated with poorer physical health across breast cancer diagnosis and survivorship****.***Accepted as poster submitted for the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) annual meeting & scientific sessions, San Francisco, CA.

Renna, M.E., Wilbourne, F.N., **Johal, S.K.,** Behringer, K.F., Bonfils, K., Huye, H., Smith, S., Thorsen, T., Stavres, J., Graybeal, A.J. (2025). Maladaptive coping skills in young adults diagnosed with metabolic syndrome: Implications for future health risks. Poster presented at the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) annual meeting and scientific sessions, San Franciso, CA.

**Johal, S.K**., Fergerson, A.K., Shrout, M.R., Madison, A.A., Wilson, S. J., Renna, M.E. (2024, April). *Trauma exposure corresponds to worse psychological functioning post diagnosis* *in breast cancer patients.* Accepted as poster submitted for presentation at the Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Student Research Symposium, Hattiesburg, MS.

**Johal, S.K**., Fergerson, A.K., Shrout, M.R., Madison, A.A., Wilson, S. J., Renna, M.E. (2024, March). *Trauma exposure corresponds to worse psychological functioning post diagnosis* *in breast cancer patients.*Accepted as poster presentation for the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) annual meeting & scientific sessions, Philadelphia, PA.

Fergerson, A.K., **Johal, S.K**., Renna, M.E. (2024, March). *Physical health disparities among sexual minority young adults with histories of childhood abuse and neglect.* Accepted as poster presentation for the Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) annualmeeting & scientific sessions, Philadelphia, PA.

Ogbaselase-Beck, F.A., **Johal, S.K,** & Karlson, C.W. (2023, March). *Racial equality for academic and behavioral outcomes for all Black youth with sickle cell disease.* Acceptedas a posterpresentation for the Society of Pediatric Psychology Annual Conference(SPPAC),Chicago, IL

Rygh, L., **Johal, S.,** Karlson, C.W. (2023, March). *It Takes a Village: An Examination of Parental Relationship Functioning During Pediatric Cancer Treatment.* Accepted as aposter presentation for the Society of Pediatric Psychology Annual Conference (SPPAC),Chicago, IL.

Turner, E., **Johal, S**., Marshall, G., Herrington, B., Criddle, J., Reddy, A., Sukumaran, A., Al Hamada, Y., Shifflet, J.M., & Karlson, C.W. (2022, June). *Inflammatory Biomarkers and Psychological Sequela in Pediatric Brain Tumor Survivors.* Presentation at the International Symposium on Pediatric Neuro-Oncology, Hamburg, Germany.

Kirkwood-Williams, W., Bailey, A., **Johal, S**., Karimi, M., McNaull, M., Jackson, E., & Karlson, C.W. (2022, June). *Medical Risk Factors for Academic Achievement and* *Emotional/Behavior Outcomes.* Presentation for the Foundation for Sickle Cell Disease Research and Educational Symposium and 45th National Sickle Cell Disease Scientific Meeting, Hollywood, FL.

Rygh, L., **Johal, S**., Johnson, H., & Karlson, C.W. (2021, April). *Virtual Reality for Pediatric Oncology Chemo-Port Access: A Pilot Effectiveness Study.* Poster presentation at the2021 Virtual Society of Pediatric Psychology Annual Conference.

**Research Experience**

**Graduate Researcher**

University of Southern Mississippi, Psychophysiology, Emotionality, and Treatment (PET) Lab

August 2023 – Present

* Conducting qualitative interviews regarding perceived barriers and facilitators of healthy eating and physical activity among young adults with and without metabolic syndrome.
* Conducting qualitative data coding for data analysis.
* Process and clean HRV data through custom scripts created in CMetX.
* Created weekly reports for Daily Stress & Health Study.

**Cardiovascular Disease Risk Study Research Assistant**

University of Mississippi Medical Center, Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior

July 2022 – May 2023

* Conducting an original project on the implications of structural racism and discrimination within African American and Black adults with cardiovascular disease in conjunction with the Jackson Heart Study and Southern Community Cohort Study.
* Facilitating quantitative data collection on census tract data for various counties in Mississippi.
* Data entry and data cleaning in SPSS.
* Learning data descriptive and regression analysis in SPSS.
* Contributing to manuscripts and presentations preparation.

**Neurocognitive Study Coordinator & Research Assistant**

University of Mississippi Medical Center, Department of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology

October 2019 – Present

* Facilitating an original study with pediatric cancer patients in utilizing virtual reality (VR) to determine pain, anxiety, and fear levels in children ages 4 – 18.
* Guiding participants through the study protocol (i.e., obtaining informed consent), gathering qualitative and quantitative data, conducting pretest and posttest.
* Assisting in manuscript writing, presentation preparation, data collection and analysis for various studies (psychological determinants and inflammatory biomarkers in brain tumor patients; trauma and emotional correlates for headache patients; emotional and behavioral process in patients with sickle cell anemia; and identifying peer relations, sleep quality and internalizing symptom data for hematology and oncology patients).
* Data collection and data entry into SPSS, data input into RedCap, and learned data analysis in SPSS.
* Exposure to some psychological tests such as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Revised Children’s Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS), Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT, version 3 & 4), Wechsler Abbreviated Scale Intelligence, 2nd Edition (WASI II), California Verbal Learning Test, version 3 (CVLT III), Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS), & Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF).

**Clinical Experience**

**Intern Counselor**

*The Center for Children and Families, Clinton, MS*

June 2022 – August 2022

Supervisor: Marisa Finlayson, M.A.

* Conducted individual therapy and family sessions and co-led group therapy.
* Worked with a demographic of children and adolescents aged 4 – 18 and adults.
* Assisted in session planning, treatment planning and session documentation.
* Conducted evidence-based therapies such as play therapy, CBT, DBT, and FFT (functional family therapy).

**Magnolia Grant Scholar, Intern Counselor**

*University of Mississippi Medical Center & The Center for Advancement of Youth, Jackson, MS*

August 2021 – May 2022

Supervisors: Steven Stafford, M.S., & Tanja Seifen, Ph.D.

* Conducted intake assessments, wrote session and progress notes, lead group and individual therapy sessions.
* Prepared sessions and treatment planning, shadowed on hospital consultations, and co-lead a social skills group for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ages 11 – 16).
* Worked at 3 Circle acute inpatient psychiatric facility with children ages 3 – 12.
* Conducted individual therapy, CBT group therapy and diagnostic interviews.
* Scored psychological assessments such as the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) and the National Institute for Children’s Health Quality (NICHQ) Vanderbilt Assessment Scale.
* Worked at the Center of the Advancement of Youth and provided individual therapy, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT).
* Led psychological evaluations and diagnostic intakes at the pediatric Weight Management Clinic.
* Conducted hospital consultations at the Batson clinic.

**Professional Affiliations**

2024-Present Society of Behavioral Medicine

2022-Present Association for Psychological Science

2020-Present American Psychological Association

2019-Present Mississippi Psychological Association

**Volunteer**

Red Cross Disaster Relief Volunteer

Mississippi Food Network Volunteer

**Certifications**

2022 – Present National Certified Counselor

2022 – Present Telehealth Certified for Mental Health Professionals

2019 – Present Human Research Citi Program Training

**Language Proficiencies**

Punjabi Native/Bilingual

Hindi Bilingual

Urdu Bilingual

**Professional References**

Megan E. Renna, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Education and Human Sciences,

School of Psychology, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS 39406

Email: [Megan.Renna@usm.edu](mailto:Megan.Renna@usm.edu)

Cynthia W. Karlson, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of SOM-Peds

Hematology/Oncology, University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson, MS 39216.

Voice: (601) 984-2723. Email: [ckarlson@umc.edu](mailto:ckarlson@umc.edu)