

VIKAS PD GAWAI

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EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ph.D., Ag and Applied Economics (AAE)	<i>Expected 2024</i>
University of Wisconsin-Madison, Masters of Economics	<i>2016-18</i>
University of Mumbai, India, Bachelor of Technology, Civil Engineering	<i>2004-08</i>

RESEARCH INTEREST

Health, Aging, Social Security, Public Policy, Human Capital, Caste (Race), Gender, Agriculture, Broadband

JOB MARKET PAPER

- Does High-Speed Internet (Broadband) Technology Affect the Mental Health of Older Adults? (*Presentations - MEA (March '23), American University (May '23), SEA (Nov '23), APPAM (Nov '23)*)

Abstract- Recent empirical evidence in economics underscores the adverse impact of internet-enabled technology (social media) on college students' mental health, mainly due to unfavorable *social comparisons*. Yet, it remains unclear how a comparable technology (high-speed internet broadband) affects a more vulnerable older population. This paper examines the effect of high-speed internet broadband on the mental health of older adults (aged 50+) in the United States. Leveraging the quasi-experimental staggered roll-out of high-speed internet broadband, combined with individual panel data, I utilize spatial, temporal, and individual-level variations in broadband availability and employ advanced difference-in-differences (DID) estimators. I find that the introduction of high-speed broadband significantly improves mental health among older adults (decline in depression symptoms by 5.2%), comparable with other major life events like job loss, recession, and the death of a spouse. I find evidence of novel mechanisms like an increase in *social connectedness* and a decline in *social isolation*. These contrasting findings for young and old cohorts underscore how similar technologies' can affect differently by age and behavior. Heterogeneous effects by race and gender highlight barriers for African Americans and women, while rural older adults benefit more from broadband, suggesting potential benefits for rural areas. The paper further uncovers other underexplored mechanisms, including health literacy, cognitive function, and technological efficiency (telehealth) in nearby hospitals. With recent massive public investments of over \$65 Billion in broadband infrastructure, these results carry significant policy implications for broadband policies and emphasize the potential benefits for older adults.

WORKING PAPERS

- Discrimination in Science: Salaries of Foreign and US Born Land-Grant University Scientists *with Jeremy Foltz (Revise and Resubmit)* (*Presentation - AAEA (August '22)*)
- Early-Life Economic Conditions and Old-Age Mortality: Evidence from Historical County-Level Bank Deposit Data, *with Valentina Duque, Jason Fletcher, Hamid Noghanibehambari, Lauren Schmitz- (Under Review)*
- The Effect of Early Life Exposures to the Green Revolution (agricultural technology) on later life Aging Outcomes *with Valentina Duque, Jinkook, Lee, Lauren Schmitz (presented at APPAM)*
- Spillover Effects of a Bicycle Policy on Girls' Enrollment in Middle Schools (*Recognition under Best Paper Scholarship (Honorable mention), Dept. of Economics, UW-Madison, 2018*)
- The Effect of Teacher Hiring Policy on Student Test Scores: A Multiple Regression Discontinuity Design Approach for one of the Largest Public Schooling in the World (*selected at American Education Finance and Policy*)

SELECTED WORKS IN PROGRESS

The effect of Broadband Technology on Social Security Disability Insurance Enrollment (*Competitive award from Retirement and Disability Research Center (RDRC) Center for Financial Security (CFS), Social Security Administration (SSA)*)

- The Intergenerational Effect of Early Life Exposures to the Green Revolution on Human Capital *with Valentina Duque, Lauren Schmitz (presented at PAA)*

COMPETITIVE HONORS

-**Diversity Fellow**, School of Public Affairs, American University 2023-
-**Research Fellow**, Retirement and Disability Research Center (**RDRC**) Center for Financial Security (**CFS**), Social Security Administration (**SSA**) 2022-
-**DEI- Diversity Scholarship** American Society of Health Economics (ASHEcon) 2021
-**Best Research Paper Scholarship (Honorable mention)** Dept. of Economics, UW Madison 2018

COMPETITIVE GRANTS AND AWARDS

RDRC - Junior Scholar **Research Competition** Award- \$5,000 2022-23
Prof. Jeremy Foltz **Research Travel** Award- \$1,100 2023
Deborah and David Penn Fund - **Research Presentation** Award- \$500 2022
UW-Madison- Graduate School - **Research Presentation** Award- \$2,500 2022
UW-Madison- CDE **Research Presentation** Award- \$950 2022
UW-Madison- Traisman Agribusiness **Graduate Fellowship**- \$750 2021
UW-Madison Student Research Grants Competition **Research Travel**- \$1,500 2020
UW Madison Graduate Student **Summer Fieldwork** Award- \$3,000 2019
Indian State Government Scholarship for Masters in Economics- \$100,000 2016-18

ACADEMIC AFFILIATIONS

-Graduate Student, Center for Demography of Health and Aging (**CDHA**), and Center for Demography and Ecology(**CDE**) 2019–Current
-Graduate Student, Institute of Research on Poverty (**IRP**) 2021-2022
-Graduate Student, Center for South Asia, (**CSA**) 2020–

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Midwest Economics Association (MEA) 2023
Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA) 2022
Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM) 2022, 23
Population Association of America (PAA) 2022
Southern Economics Association (SEA) 2023

LEADERSHIP, MENTORSHIP

UW-Madison, *Mentor for two undergrad students on a class project under Prof. Foltz* Spring 2022
UW-Madison First Generation (**FirstGen**), *Mentor for one FirstGen undergrad student* 2022
UW-Madison, AAE, *Mentor for one FirstGen undergrad student* 2022
UW-Madison First Generation (**FirstGen**), *Member* 2021–
UW-Madison CHDA NextGen Population, *Mentor for 18 students on research development* Summer 2022
UW-Madison, AAE, Faculty Hiring Committee, *Student Representative* 2022
UW-Madison, AAE, Ph.D. Admission Committee, *Student Representative* 2021
Taylor-Hibbard Club, *Athletic Chair* 2020–2022
UW-Madison AAE, Development Lab Group, *Member* 2019–

ACADEMIC SERVICES

Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM), *Abstract Reviewer* 2023
Journal- Economics of Education Review, *Reviewer* 2022-23
American Society for Health Economists (AshEcon), *Abstract Reviewer* 2022

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant to Prof. Lauren Schmitz (UW Madison, School of Public Affairs) and Prof. Valentina Duque (University of Sydney, Princeton University, American University) 2020–
Research Assistant to Prof. Jeremy Foltz and Prof. Bradford Barham (UW Madison, AAE) 2018-2020
Research Assistant to Prof. Andra Ghent (UW Madison, Wisconsin School of Business,) May-Sept (2018)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Guest Lecturer: **Agricultural & Economic Development of Africa (Health)**, (Instructor- Osaretin Ohurotimi) UW-Madison, AAE 477 Spring 2022
Guest Lecturer: **International Studies (Gender Gap in Developing Countries)**, (Instructor- Prof. Jeremy Foltz) UW-Madison, AAE 374 Spring 2022
Guest Lecturer: **DEI-focused course- The Economics of Race and Gender** (Gender Gap in Developing Countries), (Instructor- Prof. Meghan I. Esson) Bentley University, EC 298 Spring 2022

TECHNICAL SKILLS

STATA, R(basic), Python(basic), Latex

REFERENCES

Jeremy Foltz (advisor)

Professor, Agricultural and Applied Economics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
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Lauren Schmitz

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