

# VIKAS PD GAWAI

520, Taylor Hall, 427 Lorch St, Madison, 53706, WI, USA

Phone: 608-628-8674 ♦ gawai@wisc.edu ♦ <https://vikasgawai.github.io/home/>

## EDUCATION

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University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ph.D., Ag and Applied Economics	<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

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

## JOB MARKET PAPER

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- Does High-Speed Internet (Broadband) Technology Affects the Mental Health of Older Adults? (*Presentation - Midwest Economics Association (MEA) -'23, American University-'23, Southern Economics Association (SEA) -'23, Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM) -'23*)

**Abstract-** Recent evidence from the economics literature highlights the detrimental impact of social media on the mental health of college students, primarily due to unfavorable *social comparisons*. This paper examines the effect of a similar technology, high-speed internet broadband, on the mental health of older adults (aged 50+) in the United States. Leveraging the quasi-experimental staggered rollout of high-speed broadband at the census tract level from 2010 to 2018, combined with individual panel data, I utilize spatial, temporal, and individual-level variations in broadband availability and employ the latest difference-in-differences (DID) estimator. I find that the introduction of high-speed broadband improves mental health among older adults (decline in depression symptoms by about 5.2%), comparable with other major life events like job loss, recession, and the death of a spouse. The observed positive effects on mental health are primarily due to an increase in *social connectedness* and a decline in *social isolation*. These contrasting findings for younger and older cohorts emphasize that the impact of similar technologies can differ significantly based on the age and behavior of individuals. The positive effects are driven by Whites, with no effects on African-Americans, with larger positive effects in rural areas and modestly higher estimates for women. The paper also uncovers other unexplored mechanisms of improvement in health literacy and enhanced technological efficiency in nearby hospitals that might account for the observed positive effects. With recent investments of over \$42 Billion in broadband, these results carry significant policy implications for broadband availability policies and emphasize the potential benefits for the mental health of older adults.

## WORKING PAPERS

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- Discrimination in Science: Salaries of Foreign and US Born Land-Grant University Scientists *with Jeremy Foltz (Revise and Resubmit)* (*Presentation - Agriculture and Applied Economics (AAEA) -'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

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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

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-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-  
-American Society of Health Economics (ASHEcon) **DEI- Diversity Scholarship** 2021  
-Dept. of Economics, UW Madison **Recognition under ‘Best Research Paper Scholarship (Honorable mention)’**- 2018

## COMPETITIVE GRANTS AND AWARDS

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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

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-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

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

## LEADERSHIP, MENTORSHIP

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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, Agriculture and Applied Economics (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 Agriculture and Applied Economics (AAE) Faculty Hiring Committee, *Student Representative* 2022  
UW-Madison Agriculture and Applied Economics (AAE) Ph.D. Admission Committee, *Student Representative* 2021  
Taylor-Hibbard Club, *Athletic Chair* 2020–2022  
UW-Madison AAE Economic Development Lab Group, *Member* 2019–

## ACADEMIC SERVICES

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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  
Agriculture and Applied Economics (AAEA), *Abstract Reviewer* 2022, 2023  
AAEA-Health Economics Section (Chair- Prof. Di Fang) *Official Twitter Manager (with Lei Pan)* 2022-23

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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**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

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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

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

## REFERENCES

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### Jeremy Foltz (advisor)

Professor, Agricultural and Applied Economics  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
jdfoltz@wisc.edu,

### Lauren Schmitz

Assistant Professor, La Follette School of Public Affairs  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
llschmitz@wisc.edu,

### Valentina Duque

Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration and Policy

American University  
vduque@american.edu

### John Mullahy

Professor, Population Health Sciences  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
jmullahy@wisc.edu,

### Priya Mukherjee

Assistant Professor, Agricultural and Applied Economics  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
priya.mukherjee@wisc.edu,

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