

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 INTERESTS

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 '23, American University '23, SEA '23, APPAM '23*); Media Highlight: GROW MAGAZINE cover story

Abstract- Recent research has shown the negative effects of social networks on younger people's mental health. Yet, we do not know whether the same effects are present across the population, particularly for older adults, who are especially vulnerable to certain mental health conditions. I estimate the effect of broadband availability on the mental health of older adults (aged 50+) in the United States, using individual panel data and exploiting the census tract-level staggered rollout of broadband from 2010 to 2018 in the latest difference-in-differences (DID) framework. In contrast to the literature that finds harmful effects of the internet among younger populations, my results show that broadband rollout significantly reduces depression symptoms by 5.7% among older adults. The primary mechanisms driving these positive effects include an increase in self-use of the internet and virtual social connectedness and a decline in social isolation and loneliness. Improved health literacy and technological efficiency (telehealth) also partly drive the results but do not affect self-reported physical health or employment. Rural dwellers and women are the biggest beneficiaries of broadband's positive effects on mental health. I also find some evidence of the spatial spillover effects. These positive estimates are comparable with other major life events known to negatively affect the mental health of older adults, such as job loss, recession, and the death of a spouse. This work highlights broadband's unmeasured additional benefits to public investments, given the recent allocation of over \$65 billion to broadband expansion. A back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that broadband expansion may reduce the cost of excess Medicare spending by about \$5 billion due to major depressive symptoms and social isolation among older adults.

WORKING PAPERS

- Discrimination in Science: Salaries of Foreign and US Born Land-Grant University Scientists *with Jeremy Foltz (R&R at American Journal of Agricultural Economics (AJAE))*
- 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- (R&R at Journal of Population Economics)*
- Effects of Early Life Exposures to the Green Revolution (agricultural technology) on Later Life Aging Outcomes: Evidence from the Largest Aging Data *with Lauren Schmitz, Valentina Duque, Jinkook Lee, Hunter Green (presented at APPAM '22)*
- Effects of Broadband Technology on Social Security Insurance (SSI) Enrollment (*Award from Retirement and Disability Research Center (RDRC) Center for Financial Security (CFS), Social Security Administration (SSA)*)
- 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*)

SELECTED WORK IN PROGRESS

Is there a Link between Access to Broadband and Health Outcomes? A spatial econometrics approach using County Health Rankings data *with Steven Deller*

Spatially Varying Gender and Caste Inequalities in Cognition and the Contribution of Individual and State-level Characteristics Across India *with Lauren Schmitz, Kanika Arora, and Shubhashrita Basu (selected at a Workshop on Determinants of Adult Mortality, Morbidity, and Healthy Aging in LMICs at UC, Berkeley)*

Effects of Teacher Hiring Policy on Student Test Scores in Rural India: A Multiple Regression Discontinuity Design Approach for one of the Largest Public School Systems in the World *(selected at American Education Finance and Policy conference (AEFP))*

Effects of Rural Hospital Closures on Mortality in Severe Weather Conditions *(selected at Association of Environmental and Resource Economists (AERE))*

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

Center for Demography of Health and Aging **Research Travel** Award- \$2,000 2023
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, \$1000 2022, 23
UW-Madison- Graduate School - **Research Presentation** Award- \$2,500, \$1,500 2022, 23
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

Mentor for two undergrad students on a class project under Prof. Foltz 2022
Mentor for three FirstGen undergrad student 2022
UW-Madison First Generation (**FirstGen**), Member 2021–
UW-Madison CHDA NextGen Population, *Mentor for 18 students on research development* 2022
UW-Madison, AAE, Faculty Hiring Committee, *Student Representative* 2022
UW-Madison, AAE, Ph.D. Admission Committee, *Student Representative* 2021

ACADEMIC SERVICE

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

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 Olurotimi) UW-Madison, AAE 477 *Spring 2022*
Guest Lecturer: **International Studies (Gender Gap and Economics Development in Developing Countries)**, (Instructor- Prof. Jeremy Foltz) UW-Madison, AAE 374 *Spring 2022, 2023*
Guest Lecturer: **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

Assistant Professor, La Follette School of Public Affairs
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