

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

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

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

JOB MARKET PAPER

- 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 technology on the mental health of college students, primarily attributed 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 (decline in depression symptoms) among older adults, primarily due to improvement in *social connectedness*. These contrasting findings for younger and older cohorts emphasize that the impact of similar technologies can differ significantly based on age and how the technology is being used. The positive effects are driven by Whites, with no effects on African-Americans. However, I find a larger positive effect on mental health in rural areas and modestly higher estimates for women. I find an inverted U shape of the positive effects concentrated among the 65 to 85 age groups. The paper also uncovers other unexplored mechanisms, such as decreased social isolation, improved health literacy and cognition, and improved technological efficiency in nearby hospitals that might account for the observed positive effects on mental health. These results carry significant policy implications for broadband availability policies and emphasize the potential benefits for the mental health of older adults.

WORKING PAPERS

- 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)*
- 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)*)
- 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
(selected at American Education Finance and Policy)

SELECTED WORKS IN PROGRESS

- 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-
- 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

- 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
- Population Association of America (PAA) 2022

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, 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

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 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
jdfoltz@wisc.edu, (608) 262-6871

Lauren Schmitz

Assistant Professor, La Follette School of Public Affairs
University of Wisconsin-Madison
llschmitz@wisc.edu, (608) 263-7398

Valentina Duque

Visiting Scholar, Princeton University, 2022-2023
Assistant Professor, Department of Public Admin-

istration and Policy
American University
vduque@american.edu

Priya Mukherjee

Assistant Professor, Agricultural and Applied Economics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
priya.mukherjee@wisc.edu, (608) 262-8695

John Mullahy

Professor, Population Health Sciences
University of Wisconsin-Madison
jmullahy@wisc.edu, (608) 265-5410

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