

Overview

My research is at the nexus of development, health, and behavioral economics, motivated by a set of questions about the bi-directional relationships between poverty and human cognition, decision-making, and wellbeing. Poverty is typically understood as a shortage of income or assets. But growing evidence, including my own work, suggests that poverty also shapes the psychological and cognitive resources people bring to consequential choices, such as how much to invest in their children's schooling or whether to adopt a new technology. It also shapes outcomes such as productivity, mental wellbeing, and enjoyment of life, reinforcing these shortages. My goal is to identify which specific conditions (e.g. sleep, nutrition, the schooling environment) commonly associated with poverty erode or impede the growth of these resources, trace the downstream consequences for productivity, human capital accumulation, and wellbeing, and design and test scalable interventions that break these cycles.

Within this broader umbrella, my research falls into three categories. The first examines how features of the environments in which people learn and work shape long-run cognitive capacity, human capital accumulation, and life trajectories. The second investigates how specific, modifiable negative features of life in poverty, including inadequate nutrition, sleep deprivation, and heat exposure, impede productivity and cognitive function and tests interventions designed to alleviate these constraints. The third draws on my training in public health to study how the design of incentives, information, and health systems can promote health-related behaviors and improve health outcomes across a range of populations, from low-income workers in India to older adults in the US. Finally, a branch of this third line of work on health examines the relationship between poverty and mental health, asking both how economic conditions affect mental health and how, in turn, mental health and diminished cognitive bandwidth affect labor market engagement and the enjoyment individuals derive from consumption. Running across all three lines of work is a common interest in how exposure to risk and uncertainty — whether in income, health, or the broader environment — shapes decision-making, cognitive function, and wellbeing among the poor.

Methodologically, I employ field and laboratory experiments as well as secondary data analyses. Many of my field studies utilize a “lab-in-the-field” approach with detailed randomized trials in natural environments with high-frequency data collection. This approach aims for strong external validity and policy relevance while simultaneously allowing creative and rigorous measurement, which promotes internal validity and understanding of mechanisms. In the process of undertaking these studies, I co-founded the Behavioral Development Lab in Chennai, India to build the infrastructure, staff training, and data systems needed to support this work at scale for me and my students and collaborators.

Given the overlapping nature of my research themes, many of my projects speak to more than one theme. The numbered list on the last page indicates which categories each speaks to, and the parenthetical numbers throughout the statement below refer to that list.

A major theme in my research is studying how variation in one's schooling and work environments shape important long run outcomes including cognition, human capital accumulation, and labor and

marriage market outcomes. For example, I collaborated with Supreet Kaur, Christina Brown, and Geeta Kingdon to explore the possibility that schooling builds human capital not only by teaching academic content, but also by expanding the mind's capacity for cognition itself. Using a field experiment with over 1,600 primary school students in India we show that cognitive endurance – the ability to sustain performance throughout an intellectually challenging activity – is a malleable skill that can be influenced by one's environment (6). Our experiment, which provided students with focused, sustained practice in a cognitively demanding task (math or attention-heavy games), reduced the rate of decline in performance when engaged in intellectual activities (e.g. listening comprehension, IQ tests), increased attentiveness in the classroom, improved performance on psychological measures of sustained attention, and improved students' school performance by 0.09 SD in unrelated domains (e.g., Hindi). These results indicate that simply spending time in effortful thinking – without learning any directly relevant subject content – substantially improves performance on traditional measures of human capital. Because schools serving low-income children often provide fewer opportunities for this kind of sustained, focused practice, this mechanism may be an underappreciated driver of educational disparities that have bearing on both labor market outcomes and many aspects of daily life. This study was published in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Dr. Kaur and I also co-authored an article covering this research for *Scientific American* to reach an audience beyond economics (4).

A related question is whether the environment in which one works—not just studies—can fundamentally reshape long-run economic behavior. In work with Luisa Cefala, Supreet Kaur, and Yogita Shamdasani, we examine whether labor supply is habit-forming (16). Using a field experiment with 225 casual construction workers at labor stands in Chennai, India, we provide treated workers with small financial incentives to attend their labor stand for seven weeks, generating a 26% increase in labor supply. When we remove the incentives, treated workers continue to attend at rates 18% higher than control workers over the following two months—an increase consequential enough to raise their employment rate by 10%. However, disruptions that temporarily pull workers out of the labor market (e.g. heat waves, holidays) eliminate treatment effects on labor supply and work contract choice completely and immediately. This pattern speaks to a debate about how to conceptualize habit: it is inconsistent with traditional economic models of habit as intertemporal complementarities in preferences and instead aligns with psychological theories of automaticity.¹ Taken together, these findings suggest that the irregular employment patterns characteristic of low-income settings where shocks are a common occurrence may systematically inhibit workers from accumulating the habit stock needed for stable, regular work, with potential consequences for absenteeism, structural transformation, and the broader organization of labor markets in developing economies. We anticipate submitting this paper in the fall of 2026.

Bringing together the themes of education and labor market outcomes, I am also working with Marianne Bertrand and Rebecca Dizon-Ross on a study designed to improve our understanding of the

¹ In psychology, automaticity refers to behavior that becomes routinized through repetition, occurring with minimal conscious deliberation, attention, or intention—in contrast to behavior that results from a deliberate evaluation of costs and benefits.

recent downward trends in female labor force participation (FLFP), despite rising education levels, in India. We hypothesize that increasing access to education may, counterintuitively, decrease FLFP by altering marriage market outcomes. Given social norms regarding work, young women who marry “up” into wealthier families – which is possible in equilibrium given the gender imbalance² – may be prevented from entering the labor market by their husband’s family, or may choose not to enter the labor market in order to preserve status or due to income effects. We explore this hypothesis using an IV approach drawing on the rapid expansion of educational opportunities at both the primary and secondary level with three large datasets (ranging from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of observations) on educational, labor, and household outcomes. We have established a strong first stage between educational opportunities and educational attainment and are now moving forward to the full IV analysis (25). The idea of status-preservation connects to a broader phenomenon documented in the sociology literature: Sanskritization, in which lower-status (and typically lower-caste) families adopt the customs of higher-caste families, including withdrawing women from paid work, as a means of raising their social standing. Using one of the datasets mentioned previously, a 30,000-household survey experiment we conducted with the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), we are separately examining whether Sanskritization operates as an independent force behind low FLFP (24).

In additional work considering one’s environment and labor supply, I am working with Josh Dean to examine whether access to entertainment via smartphones shapes young people’s willingness to work and which jobs they take up (27). Youth unemployment in low-income settings is strikingly high, typically 15 to 40% or more, with much of the existing literature focused on demand-side explanations related to firms’ job creation. There is, however, substantial evidence that many unemployed youth decline available job opportunities or exit shortly after taking them, pointing toward supply-side forces that may also be central to high unemployment. We have piloted an experiment to examine whether smartphone-based entertainment access reduces labor supply, and to trace the mechanisms underpinning this shift in labor supply: a rising opportunity cost of time, and — connecting back to the themes above — the possibility that this access reshapes preferences around the experience of boredom and effortful activity. We are currently seeking funding for an additional round of piloting and the full experiment.

My second line of research explores how aspects of life in poverty can impede productivity, cognitive function, and decision-making, as well as what can be done to address these challenges. For example, one of my studies in this area examined the economic consequences of low caloric intake in India. This line of research provided evidence that increased caloric intake creates broadly generalizable changes in productivity with large returns. This work began with a five-week randomized controlled trial (RCT) among cycle-rickshaw drivers in Chennai, in which a randomly selected half of the participants received an additional 700 calories per day. Treated individuals showed significant improvements in both physical and cognitive tasks, and increased labor supply and income by approximately 10% by the final week. The estimated return to investment in additional calories was positive and large – 65

² India has a significant gender imbalance at birth. Over the past thirty years, there have been roughly 110 boys born for every 100 girls, resulting in a significant gender imbalance in the current marriage market.

percent over six months (22). Building on these initial findings and suggestive evidence that incorrect beliefs about the caloric content of food may play a role in low caloric intake, I conducted a second RCT with a larger sample size, more detailed cognition measures, a longer time horizon, and a secondary randomization which will allow me to assess the role of incorrect beliefs in low caloric intake. In this cross-randomization, half of the participants received information about both the returns to higher caloric intake and which foods provide more calories per unit cost. Following this cross-randomization, I tracked beliefs about the returns to caloric intake, the caloric content of food, and food consumption. I am now analyzing these new data.

I supplemented these RCTs with a natural experiment exploring the generalizability of the results. This research examines the impact of a 700 calorie per day decline in caloric intake, caused by fasting during Ramadan, on agricultural production in India (19). This analysis leverages heterogeneity in cropping cycles between and within districts as well as the fact that Ramadan cycles throughout the calendar year to generate three sources of variation in the overlap between fasting and the labor-intensive portions of the cropping cycle. Using a triple-difference approach at the district-crop-year level, I find that overlap between Ramadan and labor-intensive portions of cropping cycles results in production declines which correspond to over 1% of India's annual agricultural GDP and a 20% to 40% decrease in productivity per fasting individual. Further leveraging differences in the fraction of the district's population that is Muslim, which ranges from 0.1% to over 40%, I find significant heterogeneity in the effect: the decline in production is closely aligned with the district's Muslim population share. Multiple sources of evidence suggest that these production declines are driven primarily by reduced caloric intake rather than by other behavioral changes. This paper is under review at REStud.

Building on this work, I began to examine the impact of another common feature of the lives of those in poverty, poor sleep, in India on similar outcomes. One-third of our time is dedicated to sleep, yet little is known about the levels and consequences of sleep deprivation, especially in low-income settings. To begin to address this gap, Pedro Bessone, Gautam Rao, Frank Schilbach, and Mattie Toma, and I measured the prevalence and consequences of sleep deprivation among the urban poor in India via an RCT (8). We found that low-income adults in Chennai sleep little and poorly – 5.6 hours of objectively-measured sleep per night – despite spending over 8 hours in bed. Individuals were cross-randomized to treatments which: 1) aimed to increase nighttime sleep in their homes and 2) provided 30-minute naps at the workplace in the mid-afternoon. Both treatments were effective at increasing sleep, with a gain of approximately 30 minutes at night and 15 to 20 minutes during the nap. While increased night-sleep had no detectable effects on any of the outcomes measured, afternoon naps improved cognition, subjective wellbeing, productivity, and savings, and reduced inattention to incentives and present bias. This work was conducted in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu state government with the aim of informing local policies. It is published in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. In addition, we collaborated with Dr. Susan Redline to write an article highlighting the value of integrating social science and sleep science approaches to conduct field research on sleep around the globe (7). Accepted at *Science*, this article highlights the benefits of conducting sleep

research in everyday settings and advocates for collaborations between researchers and policy makers to test creative scalable solutions to improve sleep.

Drawing on the data generated by this study, Isadora Frankenthal, Pedro Bessone, and I also conducted an analysis of the effect of temperature on productivity and learning-on-the-job, an increasingly important concern given the rapid increase in temperature in many parts of the world (18). Building on the previous literature, we document a substantial immediate negative effect of heat on productivity in a previously unstudied domain, individual and cognitively oriented work in data entry, and are able to isolate the margins of adjustment through which the changes occur, primarily an increase in breaks during the day. In addition, we document a novel dynamic effect. Heat reduces not only contemporaneous output but also the rate of output growth (learning-on-the-job). These effects are large: roughly 3 percentage points per degree Celsius over the past week. In addition, the workers initially exposed to higher temperatures show persistently lower output, with no signs of “catch-up” in the second half of the study. This paper is under review at the *Economic Journal*.

In addition to these empirical studies, I have also written overview articles that have helped establish cognitive function as a lens for studying poverty. With Frank Schilbach and Sendhil Mullainathan, I co-authored an AER P&P article about “bandwidth” — cognitive capacity underlying attention, self-control, and other higher-order functions — and argued that many correlates of poverty, from hunger to sleep to financial worry, can be understood through their effects on this scarce resource (13). This piece has become widely referenced in the growing literature. With Emma Boswell Dean and Frank Schilbach, I expanded this framework into a full-length primer for the field: a book chapter in *The Economics of Poverty Traps* (University of Chicago Press on behalf of the National Bureau of Economic Research) that catalogs the major domains of cognitive function — attention, inhibitory control, memory, and higher-order executive function, — reviews measurement tools suited to field settings in developing countries, and synthesizes the evidence on both how poverty shapes cognition and how cognition shapes economic behavior (10). Together, these two pieces aim to lower the barrier to entry for development economists seeking to incorporate cognitive measures and the concept of bandwidth into their own research.

I also recently co-authored an article in *World Development* with Chris Barrett highlighting an important, but less studied, potential foundation for poverty traps: such traps may arise not only from insufficient capital and an inability to borrow — the standard account — but from differential exposure to uninsured risk and the ability to cope with it (2). We distinguish between “type I” (inescapable) traps driven by permanent human capital loss and “type M” (multiple-equilibrium) traps in which optimal behavior bifurcates around a threshold. We organize the empirical literature — including my own work in this space — around three categories of intervention: risk reduction, risk transfer, and behavioral coping mechanisms. This essay ties together mechanisms explored throughout my empirical research and situates them within the poverty traps literature that has been central to the development literature for decades.

More broadly, this line of research speaks to a long-standing question about the nature of poverty that I plan to continue to explore: does poverty have hidden costs that impede one's ability to escape? Understanding which features of life in poverty have this impact and developing practical and scalable ways to address them will both enhance knowledge and provide actionable solutions.

The poor often disproportionately suffer from poor health, impeding their productivity and limiting wellbeing. Building on my training in public health as well as economics, my third line of research considers how to promote health across a wide range of populations. Linking back to my interest in cognition and decision-making, one strand of this work focuses on how consumers interpret health related information. With Sendhil Mullainathan, I examine how firms' use of nutrition claims in advertising tracks the diffusion of public health messages through the media, suggesting that firms may exploit heuristic ("System 1") processing to market low-nutritional-value products as healthy (15). Another strand of my research in this area tests how the design of financial incentives shapes engagement with health-promoting behaviors across different populations. With Jessica Kopsic, George Loewenstein, and Kevin Volpp, I ran an RCT with older adults comparing individualistic, altruistic, and cooperative/competitive monetary incentives for completing online cognitive training exercises. All three incentive structures roughly doubled engagement relative to a no-incentive control, and the socially oriented incentives produced more persistent use after incentives were removed, though none produced generalizable gains on an independent cognitive testing battery (published in the *Journal of Health Economics*) (14). In a related trial led by Jeffrey Kullgren, we tested whether employer matching of employees' own financial deposits increased participation in deposit contracts for weight loss. Matching did not increase participation; but participants in two of the three deposit-contract arms lost significantly more weight than controls at 24 and/or 36 weeks (published in the *American Journal of Health Promotion*) (12). I am extending this interest in incentive design to a new population as a co-investigator on the CuddleCard trial (Margart Parker and Margaret McConnell, co-PIs), which is testing whether labeled weekly cash transfers to low-income mothers of preterm infants increase NICU visitation, breastmilk provision, and skin-to-skin care (5).

Separately, with Rashmi Dayalu, Elizabeth Cafiero-Fonseca, Victoria Fan, and David Bloom, I helped develop a multi-criteria algorithm for prioritizing health conditions for resource allocation, applied to New Zealand's Waikato region (11). The algorithm combined disease burden, household financial impact, cost-effectiveness, equity, and multimorbidity data with preference weights elicited from a public survey, producing a ranked list of priority conditions that closely tracked the public's own stated health concerns (published in *Cost Effectiveness and Resource Allocation*).

More recently, I have been exploring a high-stakes public health concern in low-income settings: diabetes (26). Nearly one in ten people around the globe have diabetes, a disease which imposes a significant burden on quality of life and longevity. This burden is expected to continue to grow rapidly as populations age, diets become richer, and individuals become increasingly sedentary. Yet, intensive behavioral interventions programs are typically quite expensive and difficult to scale or sustain. We propose to evaluate an intervention to reduce diabetes at low cost in a sustainable manner – the delivery

of parboiled rice through public food distribution systems. Lab studies find that consumption of parboiled rice (versus non-parboiled rice) significantly reduces blood glucose for both healthy and diabetic individuals. Working with Harsha Thirumurthy and Jinkook Lee we are leveraging quasi-exogenous variation in the distribution of parboiled rice through the Public Distribution System (PDS) in India, which provides roughly 30% of the rice consumed in India, to study the impact of parboiling rice on diabetes at scale. Because rice is the staple food for over half the world's population, even small reductions in its glycemic load could produce enormous public health benefits.

Given my expertise in public health and the use of econometric methods in identifying causal effects drawing on natural experiments, I was invited by PNAS to write a commentary for Ralph Lawton's 2025 paper on hookworm eradication campaigns and the hygiene hypothesis. The commentary highlights the strength of Lawton's identification strategy — combining geographic variation in pre-eradication hookworm prevalence with variation in the timing of the campaign across birth cohorts — and situates the paper's findings (reduced inflammation, fewer allergies, and a 2.5-month gain in lifespan among dewormed individuals) in relationship to the existing evidence on deworming's short-run benefits for nutrition and human capital (3).

Finally, expanding from a focus on physical health, and tying back to my work relating poverty and cognitive function, I have begun to consider questions about the relationship between poverty and elements of mental health and utility/enjoyment of life. For example, migration is central to economic opportunity for many of the world's poor. Within India, roughly one in seven adults migrates each year driven primarily by economic opportunity. Yet, many migrants experience poor mental health while working in low-wage positions far from home. In addition, many of the firms that rely on migrant labor experience high turnover and absenteeism and low worker productivity, limiting firm productivity and growth. Achyuta Adhvaryu, Pedro de Souza, Anant Nyshadham, Advait Rajagopal, Andelyn Russell, and I explore a low-cost and scalable intervention to improve outcomes for both sides of the market: fostering a friendship between migrant factory workers (21). In this RCT with over 1,000 young female migrants at a garment factory in India, we find that providing an introduction between two migrant workers and encouraging friendship over a period of two months is effective at increasing the number of friends an individual has, including new friendships beyond the direct introduction. This heightened social connection significantly reduces rates of depression and anxiety, enhancing worker wellbeing, and improving worker productivity, by 3% on average, with larger benefits to more experienced workers. These gains are economically meaningful, leading the firm involved to scale the intervention across all of its factories, employing roughly 130,000 workers. We have begun presenting this study and will have a working paper available shortly.

This study is complemented by an RCT which examines how poverty may impede welfare, both directly via lower consumption and indirectly through taxes on cognition (i.e. “bandwidth taxes”) (9). Specifically, many of the conditions associated with poverty (e.g., poor sleep, stress, etc.) may not only impact productivity and decision-making, as described above, but may also negatively influence perceptions of experiences via reductions in cognitive resources. If such taxes reduce enjoyment from

consumption (e.g., when sleep deprived, a person enjoys watching a movie less), being poor would result in a “double-tax” in which the poor not only consume less but also have reduced utility from a given unit of consumption. We evaluated this hypothesis by experimentally altering bandwidth, via both commonly used lab-based methods and methods akin to natural bandwidth taxes, and studied downstream effects on the value of consumption. Following treatment, participants undertook simple lab-based tasks to measure bandwidth, followed by consumption activities and ratings of their enjoyment. We found that the bandwidth taxes reduce enjoyment of consumption activities, with the strongest effects on the value of food – a common and necessary type of consumption. These results deepen our understanding of the consequences of poverty for human welfare as well as the relative costs and benefits of poverty-alleviation programs. For example, they suggest that the benefits of cash transfer programs may be larger than just the gains associated with additional consumption; the value of existing consumption may also increase. This study, coauthored with Atheendar Venkataramani, was published in *PNAS*.

I am currently working to expand this line of research on mental health and economic circumstances with Leandro Carvalho, Vincent Somville, Damien de Walque, Jingyao Wei, and Nick Grandstaff (23). Our focus in this study is the unstable and unpredictable incomes that are ubiquitous among the poor. The constant swings in income (volatility) and unpredictability of their timing and magnitude (uncertainty) may make it challenging for many households to smooth consumption as effectively as traditional models predict. And the lack of smoothing or the additional cognitive effort required to smooth may come with costs to mental health. The longstanding literature on the welfare consequences of these patterns struggles with causal identification given the difficulty in knowing the income generating process underlying the observed realizations. In addition, the high frequency panel data that is required for this work is rare and typically does not contain information on mental health. Our experiment aims to fill these gaps. The four-arm design with roughly 2,300 participants in Ghana not only allows us to estimate how households react to income instability, but also to parse the impacts of volatility (fully anticipated ups and downs in earnings) from uncertainty (lack of knowledge of future income). This exogenous variation is combined with detailed survey data on consumption, expenditures, income, savings and assets, loans and debt, transfers, and mental health, collected every two weeks. In addition, for a separate sample of 500 individuals, we elicited individuals’ incentive-compatible willingness to forgo income to obtain a stable and predictable schedule relative to schedules with predictable volatility or risk. While we are still waiting on the results of cortisol assays – which objectively measure stress – to finalize the paper, we have drafted an initial working paper with the preliminary results of the study.

While developing this RCT studying income volatility and uncertainty, we were able to leverage the pilot data to examine how mental health influences engagement with, and productivity in, the labor market in different environments (1). Specifically, the study of the relationship between mental health and labor market engagement and success has two phases in which we examine (i) job take-up and (ii) labor supply, output, and earnings conditional on job take-up, as well as quit rates. We find that individuals with depression and anxiety, mental health burdens which are common in this population,

are much more likely to decline work offers outside the home but equally likely to accept work-from-home positions. However, when working from home, poor mental health does not predict work completion, income, or quit rates. This paper was published in the *Journal of Development Economics*.

Complementing this work, Jingyao Wei, Simon Taye, Damien de Walque, Hao Wang, and I ask whether one's physical environment can similarly compound the mental health burden of poverty. A large literature documents that rising temperatures may harm mental health, yet results are inconsistent across populations and settings. We propose and test one potential source of this heterogeneity: underlying economic stress. We test this hypothesis using panel data from Indonesia, leveraging three distinct and varied sources of economic stress: a large cross-wave collapse in world palm oil prices that sharply reduced incomes for oil palm-farming households, a sudden and unanticipated 30% fuel price increase following the removal of a longstanding government subsidy, and recent job loss. We find a precisely estimated null effect of temperature on depressive symptoms in the general population. However, for individuals experiencing any of the three economic shocks, a one-degree Celsius increase in temperature raises depressive symptoms by 0.04 to 0.09 standard deviations. This paper is currently under review at *Frontiers in Behavioral Economics* (20).

Finally, with Simone Schaner and Jinkook Lee, I have studied the causal effects of an aggregate health shock – the Covid-19 pandemic – on mental health (17). We leverage the quasi-random timing of India's elections, which are typically accompanied by travel for large rallies, that coincided with the rise of the Delta variant. Using a difference-in-differences strategy, in election states we find additional time outside the home and a more than doubling of the incidence of Covid in the months following the elections. These changes are accompanied by a roughly 30% decline in mental health, measured by PHQ-4 scores. These effects are remarkably durable, persisting for nearly a year after the shock. A placebo test with an earlier election suggests this decline is not simply an election effect. Finally, we explore a number of potential channels for these negative mental health effects including economic impacts, stress/worry, loneliness, and direct effects of disease. This paper is under review at the *World Bank Economic Review*.

Summary and Broader Impact

In sum, although my research is interdisciplinary and involves a variety of topical areas (e.g., physical and mental health, education, labor markets) and partners (governments, firms, schools), it is unified by a desire to understand the bidirectional links between poverty, productivity, cognition, and wellbeing and to find scalable ways to alleviate poverty and reduce its harms.

Since most of my work requires original data collection, I have written many grant proposals and been successful in securing research funding for this work: over the course of my career, I have raised approximately \$7.75 million in research funding.³ This funding reflects strong and sustained support from federal agencies, including a K01, R01, and administrative supplement awards from the National

³ This figure includes studies on which I am the PI or Co-PI combined with the sub-award amounts to my institution when I am a Co-I.

Institutes of Health, as well as grants from the National Science Foundation and USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV). This federal support has been complemented by funding from private foundations, reflecting the breadth of interest in this research across both academic and policy-oriented funding communities. Together, this generous support has enabled the large-scale field experiments and data collection efforts that underlie the empirical contributions described above.

The research described above has translated directly into policy and firm action, and has taken hold within the academic literature as well. On the policy side, I have presented preliminary findings on diabetes and food procurement policy to government ministers in Tamil Nadu, a state of more than 70 million people, laying the groundwork for a potential future prospective evaluation of the state's food support system. Earlier work on sleep among the urban poor similarly informed discussions with state ministers on housing and transportation policy. On the firm side, a study on mental health support for young women who had migrated to work in Indian garment factories produced productivity gains large enough that the partner firm expanded the program across all of its 130,000-plus employees, along with a commitment to continue the program for new hires. I continue to work with a collaborator on the study, the Good Business Lab, to bring these results to major purchasers, such as The Gap, who can influence labor practices across their supplier networks. This work has also had a substantial influence on academic thought: collectively, my research has been cited more than 1,400 times (h-index of 13), with more than 500 citations for "The Psychological Lives of the Poor" (with Frank Schilbach and Sendhil Mullainathan, *American Economic Review P&P*, 2016) alone, helping to anchor a growing literature at the intersection of psychology and poverty.

Publications, Working Papers, and Works in Progress

	Title (abbreviated)	Year	Coauthors	Status	Poverty's impacts on productivity and cognition	Human capital accumulation	Mental health/wellbeing	Health
1	Psychological barriers to participation in the labor market: Evidence from rural Ghana	2026	Carvalho, de Walque, Somville, Wei	Published, JDE	x		x	
2	On risk-based poverty traps	2026	Barrett	Published, World Development	x		x	
3	Rethinking early-life pathogen exposure: Lessons from a natural experiment controlling hookworms	2025	--	Published, PNAS, <i>Non-peer reviewed commentary</i>		x		
4	How to build kids' 'cognitive endurance' in an age of distraction	2026	Kaur	Published, Scientific American, <i>non-peer reviewed</i>	x	x		
5	CuddleCard: Protocol for a randomized controlled trial evaluating the effect of providing financial support to low-income mothers of preterm infants on parental caregiving in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)	2025	Alsager, Cordova-Ramos, Drainoni, Farah, Fink, Kalluri, Madore, McConnell, Parker, Peña, Silverstein, Simoncini, Sriprasad	Published, BMC Pediatrics		x		
6	Cognitive endurance as human capital	2025	Brown, Kaur, Kingdon	Published, QJE	x	x		
7	Informing sleep policy through field experiments	2021	Rao, Redline, Schilbach, Toma	Published, Science	x	x		
8	The economic consequences of increasing sleep among the urban poor	2021	Bessone, Rao, Schilbach, Toma	Published, QJE	x	x		
9	Poverty-related bandwidth constraints reduce the value of consumption	2021	Venkataramani	Published, PNAS	x		x	
10	Poverty and Cognitive Function	2018	Dean, Schilbach	Book chapter, Univ. of Chicago Press	x	x	x	
11	Priority setting in health: Development and application of a multi-criteria algorithm for the population of New Zealand's Waikato region	2018	Bloom, Cafiero-Fonseca, Dayalu, Fan	Published, Cost Effectiveness and Resource Allocation				x
12	A randomized controlled trial of employer matching of employees' monetary contributions to deposit contracts to promote weight loss	2017	Asch, Driggers, Gatto, Kullgren, Loewenstein, Norton, Pellathy, Shea, Tao, Troxel, Volpp, Zhu	Published, Am J Health Promotion				x
13	The psychological lives of the poor	2016	Mullainathan, Schilbach	Published, AER P&P	x		x	
14	Comparing the effectiveness of individualistic, altruistic, and competitive incentives in motivating completion of mental exercises	2015	Kopsic, Lowenstein, Volpp	Published, JHE				x
15	The psychology of nutrition messages	2008	Mullainathan	Published, Adv. in Health Econ.	x			x
16	Habit formation in labor supply	--	Cefala, Kaur, Shamdasani	Working paper	x	x		
17	The impact of increased Covid-19 incidence on mental health: Evidence from India	--	Lee, Schaner	Under review, World Bank Economic Review			x	x
18	Ambient air temperature and productivity and learning at work	--	Bessone, Frankenthal	Under review, the Economic Journal	x	x		
19	Ramadan and agricultural output	--	--	Under review, REStud				
20	Heat, economic stress, and mental health: Evidence from Indonesia	--	de Walque, Taye, Wang, Wei	Under review, Frontiers in Behavioral Economics	x		x	
21	Mental health and migration outcomes	--	Adhvaryu, de Souza, Nyshadham, Rajagopal, Russell	Presentation stage, working paper available fall 2026			x	

Publications, Working Papers, and Works in Progress

	Title (abbreviated)	Year	Coauthors	Status	Poverty' s impacts on productivity and cognition	Human capital accumulation	Mental health/wellbeing	Health
22	The economic costs of low caloric intake: Evidence from India	--	--	Working paper	x	x		
23	The causal effects of income volatility and income risk	--	Carvalho, de Walque, Grandstaff, Somville, Wei	Working paper, cortisol assays underway	x		x	
24	Beliefs about beliefs about gender in India: Implications for female labor force participation and time use	--	Bertrand, Dizon-Ross	Field work completed, data analysis in progress	x			
25	Access to education and female labor force participation in India	--	Bertrand, Dizon-Ross	Data analysis in progress		x		
26	Reducing diabetes at scale in India	--	Lee, Thirumurthy	Data analysis in progress				x
27	Access to entertainment, boredom, and youth labor supply	--	Dean	Piloting	x			