
M. Ali Mokhtari

Applied Microeconomics | Causal Inference | Development, Labor & Health Economics

Website: malim.ch | [Google Scholar](#) | Email: mokhtm@usi.ch

Based in Lugano, Switzerland | Iranian Nationality | Swiss B Permit

Education

- **Ph.D. in Economics**, Università della Svizzera Italiana (USI), Lugano
Oct 2019 – Oct 2025 (Internal defense passed June 2025)
Co-Advisors: [Fabrizio Mazzonna](#), [Lorenz Kueng](#)
 - **Swiss Program for Doctoral Students**, Study Center Gerzensee
Swiss National Bank | *Aug 2019 – Sep 2020*
 - **Visiting Fellow**, University of Zurich, Department of Economics
Aug 2018 – Feb 2019, Host: [Lorenzo Casaburi](#)
Conducted research in the [Development Economics Group](#).
 - **M.Sc. in Industrial Engineering**, Institute for Management and Planning Studies (IMPS), Tehran | *Sep 2012 – Sep 2015*
 - **B.Sc. in Industrial Engineering and Mathematics (Dual Degree)**, Tehran Polytechnic (AUT) | *Sep 2008 – Sep 2012*
-

Selected Research Projects

- **Efficient Redistribution: Universal Basic Income and Human Capital Investment** ([link](#)) *Job Market Paper*. Medium- and long-term effects of a nationwide UBI-like program launched in Iran in 2010. Using a difference-in-differences event study, we show that transfers relaxed household credit constraints and reallocated children's time from work to school. A 10% increase in resources raised school attendance and literacy among exposed cohorts.
- **Fueling Inequality: A Novel Estimate from Large-Scale Reforms** ([link](#)) with Hamed Ghoddusi
Journal of Environmental Economics and Management, 134, 103240, 2025 (*JEEM*).
We provide the first causal estimate of how replacing fuel subsidies with universal cash transfers affects inequality, finding that reallocating about USD 1 per capita per day from subsidies to transfers reduces expenditure inequality by 8%.

-
- **The Vital Role of Cash Transfers: Lessons from the Largest Energy Subsidy Reform in the Developing World** ([link](#)) Revise and Resubmit at *Energy Policy*. Excluding non-citizens from Iran's oil-to-cash reform created large income, poverty, and child-health gaps—arising purely from transfer exclusion—illustrating why subsidy reforms face resistance without compensatory transfers.
 - **Opioids Ease My Pain: Early-life Malnutrition and Elderly Outcomes** ([link](#)) *Social Science & Medicine*, 327, 115940, 2023. I provide the first causal evidence linking early-life malnutrition to later-life opioid misuse, likely mediated by chronic pain and deteriorated physical health.
 - **Short-term Fetal Nutritional Stress and Long-term Health: Child Height** ([link](#)) with S.M. Karimi, B.B. Little *American Journal of Human Biology*, 33(6), 2021 — Editor's Choice. We provide causal evidence that in-utero exposure to the fasting month of Ramadan reduces adolescent height, with stronger effects for boys and for second-trimester exposure.
-

Professional Experience

- **Teaching Assistant, Causal Inference for Policy Evaluation**
Master of Economics, USI Lugano (Prof. Fabrizio Mazzonna)
Sep 2022 – Present
Overall TA Satisfaction (1–10): 2024: 9.6, 2025: 9.22.
- **Teaching Assistant, Macroeconomics I, II**
Master of Economics, USI Lugano (Prof. Giovanni Pica)
Sep 2020 – Present
Overall TA Satisfaction (1–10): 2024: 9.18, 2025: 8.5.
- **Policy Evaluation**, World of Economy Institute (Tehran)
Leading economic think tank. Conducted applied micro and policy evaluation projects in collaboration with researchers at the National University of Iran (now Shahid Beheshti University).
Jan 2014 – Aug 2018.

Upcoming Part-Time Role (from Feb 2026)

- **Adjunct Professor of Applied Statistics**, Swiss School of Business and Management (SSBM), Geneva.
-

Skills

Causal Inference & Econometrics: Difference-in-differences, RDD, matching, IV, synthetic control, structural modeling. **Data Science & Programming:** Python, R, Stata, SQL, SPSS, C#, C++ , Excel.

Honors and Awards

- CHF 16,500 Research Fellowship from the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology to support a visiting period in Development Economics at the University of Zurich (2018–2019).
 - Conference travel grants from the Economic Research Forum (ERF, 2023) and Rare Voices in Economics (2022) for meeting and workshop participation.
 - Best Article in Welfare Economics of the Year in Iran (2016); award included a USD 2,000 monetary prize.
-

Language

English (Proficient), Italian (B1), German (A1.2), Persian (Native), Arabic (B1)

References

Fabrizio Mazzonna

Professor and Head, Department of Economics, USI Lugano
fabrizio.mazzonna@usi.ch

Lorenzo Casaburi

Associate Professor, Department of Economics, University of Zurich
lorenzo.casaburi@econ.uzh.ch
Letters handled by secretary: casaburi.admin@econ.uzh.ch

Hamed Ghoddusi

Associate Professor, California Polytechnic State University
hghoddus@calpoly.edu

Giovanni Pica

Professor and Dean, Faculty of Economics, USI Lugano
giovanni.pica@usi.ch