

Matías Villalba Ortega

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Graduated from Universidad del Pacífico with a Bachelor's degree in Economics, advised by Professors Alberto Chong and Edgar Castro on a thesis examining the impact of COVID-19 policies on the efficiency of public procurement. Passionate about academia and research, with interests in development economics, machine learning, and health economics. U.S. lawful permanent resident (Green Card holder) with full work authorization and open to relocate.

EDUCATION

- **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)** Online
MicroMasters Program in Data, Economics, and Design of Policy Feb 2022 - May 2025
Program designed and run by MIT's Department of Economics and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL).
Courses: Data Analysis for Social Scientists, Designing and Running Randomized Evaluations, Microeconomics, Political Economy and Economic Development, Foundations of Development Policy
- **Universidad del Pacífico** Lima, Perú
B.Sc. in Economics GPA: 14.47/20, (3.5/4)* Mar 2017 - Jul 2024
Last two years GPA: 17.17/20, (3.92/4). *Calculated in accordance with alphabetic grade conversion table from Scholaro Inc.
Relevant courses: Causal Inference and ML, Machine Learning for Economists, Econometrics I, Econometrics II, Mathematics IV

SKILL SUMMARY

- **Technical Skills:** Python, Stata, R, Julia, LaTeX, Git/GitHub, Power BI, Microsoft 365, SurveyCTO
- **Data & Research:** Machine Learning, Econometrics, Survey Design, Web Scraping, Data Cleaning, Data Visualization, NLP
- **Language Skills:** Spanish (Native), English (Advanced, TOEFL iBT 108/120), Academic Writing, Public Speaking

PUBLICATIONS

- **The Effect of Public Procurement Flexibilization on its Efficiency: Evidence from the Peruvian Case during the Pandemic** (original title in spanish)
In González Vigil, F. (Ed.) (2025). *Applied Economics: Economic Research Essays 2023* (pp. 129–156). Universidad del Pacífico. <https://doi.org/10.21678/978-9972-57-553-2>
 - Selected as one of the top undergraduate theses for inclusion in an annual book highlighting exceptional research.
 - Advisors: Alberto Chong (Georgia State University) and Edgar Castro Mendez (George Mason University)

WORKING PAPERS

- **Discretionary Procurement Flexibilization, Efficiency, and Rent-Seeking: Evidence from Chile during COVID-19** (with Edgar Castro Mendez and Anastasiya Yarygina Udovenko)
 - We find that the introduction of a size threshold to facilitate the use of direct deals in Chile's COVID-19 procurement reforms led to substantial contract size manipulation. We document bunching below the threshold, evidence of contract splitting, and show that discretion reduced unit prices and improved reporting quality in small contracts.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- **Discretion, Transparency and Procurement Efficiency: Evidence from the COVID pandemic in Colombia** (with Edgar Castro Mendez and Anastasiya Yarygina Udovenko)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- **Consultancy in Data Analysis for Fiscal Program Evaluations** Remote
Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Mar 2025 - To date
 - Ongoing consultancy with the Fiscal Management Division (IFD/FMM), conducting data analysis to support the impact evaluation of multiple fiscal programs across the LAC region.
- **Research Assistant to Edgar Castro[†]** Remote
Independent Feb 2023 - Jan 2025
 - Worked on multiple concurrent projects in political economy, primarily focusing on impact evaluation studies analyzing the effects of COVID-19 policies in Colombia and Chile. [†]Post-doctoral fellow and term-professor at George Mason University Korea. PhD in Economics at GMU.
 - **Achievements and responsibilities:**
 - Processed and analyzed large-scale government datasets (2M+ observations) using Python and Stata.
 - Implemented web-scraping, OCR pipelines, and fine-tuned Large Language Models (LLMs) for data extraction.
 - Recognized as co-author on multiple papers due to significant contributions; continued collaboration post-employment.
- **Research Assistant to Manuel Barrón*** Lima, Perú
Research Center of Universidad del Pacífico (CIUP) Sep 2023 - Dec 2024
 - Led the implementation of a randomized control trial assessing the impacts of homophily in student social networks.
 - *Researcher at CIUP and professor at Universidad del Pacífico. PhD in Agric. & Res. Economics at UC Berkeley.
 - **Achievements and responsibilities:**
 - Designed and executed baseline and endline surveys using SurveyCTO.
 - Performed data cleaning and analysis of administrative datasets (+250k observations) using Python and Stata.
 - Prepared publication-quality tables in LaTeX, and developed informative data visualizations.

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

- **Financial Planning Intern** Lima, Perú
Alicorp S.A.A. *Aug 2022 - Apr 2023*
- **Lift Operator (Part-time)** California, US
Boreal Ridge Corporation *Dec 2018 - Mar 2019*

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, AND AWARDS

- **2024 Annual Congress of the Peruvian Economic Association (PEA)** Lima, Perú
Invited Speaker *Aug 2024*
- **Lima ‘2023 Summer School in Economics** Lima, Perú
Participant *Mar 2023*
Courses: *Machine Learning for Economics, Diff in Diff: foundations and new methodology, Advanced Mathematics for Economics*
 - **Details:** Organized by the Lima School of Economics (LimaSE) and UBC Vancouver School of Economics (VSE)
- **National Essay Contest on Corruption** Lima, Peru
Winner *Nov 2021*
 - Organized by the Embassy of Sweden, the Center for Ethics and Social Responsibility (CERS), and the Cultural Center of Universidad del Pacífico.

REFERENCES

Edgar Castro
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