The

Slice

The UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education's Quarterly Newsletter

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Analyzing Perceptions

Measuring Trust in COVID-19 Vaccine Messages with Perception Analyzer Technology

To better understand the public's perception of complex issues, the UF/IFAS Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources (PIE Center) acquired Dialsmith perception analyzer technology.

The perception analyzer dials allow researchers to measure the reactions of focus group participants when exposed to media content. Continuous moment-to-moment data provides information on which specific messages resonate with the audience.

The PIE Center conducted its first study using the dials during summer 2021. A team of five graduate students examined college students' trust of messages related to the COVID-19 vaccine by measuring participants' reactions to a series of short videos.

The videos represented various sources including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Red Cross and different celebrities. As participants watched each video, they were asked to continuously turn their perception analyzer dial to indicate their level of trust in the information presented.

"The perception analyzer dials helped us gather data in a new way," said Meredith Ogelsby, agricultural education and communication graduate student. "Our results paint a bigger picture of college students' trust in COVID-19-related messages."

Results from the study found that college students trusted messages that emphasized the COVID-19 vaccine would allow people to return to a normal way of life. Participants were more likely to trust

videos that featured speakers and organizations they recognized, such as famous athletes or prominent figures at the University of Florida.

Researchers presented these findings at the 2022 National Agricultural Communications Symposium (NACS) in New Orleans, Louisiana. Their paper, *Tempered Trust: Understanding College Students' Trust of COVID-19 Video Content Using Moment-to-Moment Analysis,* received the outstanding research paper award.

" **Our results paint a bigger picture of college students' trust in COVID-19-related messages.**

The PIE Center looks forward to incorporating the perception analyzer dials into future research related to messaging. The technology provides an opportunity for more in-depth analysis than traditional methods, resulting in practical applications for communicators.

The perception analyzer dials will be a valuable resource for researchers who utilize the PIE Center's new Social Science Research Lab, opening in mid-2022. The facility will serve as a location for focus groups, workshops and collaboration among social scientists.

If you are interested in using the perception analyzer dials for your research, please contact the PIE Center at **piecenter@ifas.ufl.edu**. PIE Center faculty and staff have received training on how to operate the dials and are prepared to assist with research initiatives in the Social Science Research Lab.

For more information about the PIE Center's approach and services, visit:

https://piecenter.com/services/.

Partnering for Preparation

A PIE Center affiliate program is helping to prepare Floridians for natural disasters.

The Florida Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) formed a new partnership with the Florida Public Radio Emergency Network (FPREN). FPREN is a statewide communications network that reaches 99% of Florida's population and provides real-time updates during times of crisis.

Through this new partnership, videos developed by PIE Center staff as part of the Florida EDEN Readiness series will now be used in FPREN broadcasts.

"Our UF/IFAS experts provide information on a variety of topics related to disaster preparedness," said Angie Lindsey, point of contact for Florida EDEN. "We are looking forward to collaborating with FPREN to develop future content and reach a larger audience."

Revamping Websites

After the successful launch of the PIE Center's new website in 2020, two PIE Center affiliate programs revamped their websites.

The Center for Rural Enterprise Engagement (CREE) and the Southeastern Coastal Center for Agricultural Health and Safety (SCCAHS) both launched new websites at the end of 2021.

The new websites are part of an effort to expand reach and engage diverse audiences. As the PIE Center continues to work with CREE and SCCAHS, the updated websites will improve the visibility of projects and assist in disseminating resources.

ruralengagement.org

sccahs.org

Student Spotlight

Naik Wali

Naik Wali is a visiting scholar from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. He came to the University of Florida as part of a scholarship opportunity that allowed him to gain experience from a top university anywhere in the world.

At the PIE Center, Wali works on research projects with Lauri Baker, associate professor of agricultural education and communication. Wali recently presented a poster titled *Trust in Trying Times: A Quantitative Study to Understand Rural, Suburban and Urban American's Trust of COVID-19 Information Sources* at the 2022 Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists (SAAS) conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Pakistan

Wali says his time at the PIE Center has resulted in new skills, connections and interests. With a newly discovered passion for research, Wali intends to take what he has learned back to Pakistan to work with local farmers on improving communications. The PIE Center's podcast, Science by the Slice, has inspired Wali to consider starting an accessible agricultural podcast in Pakistan.

Fun Fact: Naik enjoys watching documentaries about outer space and discussing theories of the universe with his friends.

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CREE: **ruralengagement.org**   SCCAHS: **sccahs.org**

Florida EDEN: **piecenter.com/resources/fl-eden/**

Science by the Slice: **piecenter.com/media/podcast/**

Southeastern Coastal Center for Agricultural Health and Safety

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