

# Menstrual Health Management and Worker Productivity in the Bangladeshi Garment Sector

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# Introduction

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- Lacking access to hygienic **menstrual health management (MHM)** material is a potential reason
  - Inferior material: **cloth, paper, rags**, leaves, soil, or nothing (Sumpter & Torondel 2013, Loughnan 2016, van Eijk 2016, Krenz & Strulik 2019)
  - Inferior material affects health and possibly productivity and earnings (Das 2015, Torondel 2018)

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  - Inferior material affects health and possibly productivity and earnings (Das 2015, Torondel 2018)
- hygienic MHM material present in the market
- Possible major constraints to access to improved MHM material are:
  1. **limited information**
  2. **high prices**
  3. **stigmatization**

# MHM Background

## MHM in the garment sector

- 20 - 70 % of absent days due to menstruation (Water Aid, WSCC & Unilever 2013, SNV 2015)
  - in our sample: self-reported reasons for missed work in the past 12 month
    - 13 % due to menstrual health related problem
    - 4 % due to lack of adequate MHM products
- ⇒ probably lower bound figure (self-reported, unclear attribution of following infections, ect.)

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## Pad usage at baseline

- 49% “never” (Phase II: 65%)
- 41% “always” (Phase II: 31%)
- 10% “sometimes” (Phase II: 4%)



This Study

# In a Nutshell

Analyze the role of **information**, **price** and **stigma** in MHM on:

- pads adoption
- willingness to pay
- labor market outcomes: **absenteeism**, **earnings**, **overtime**, **turnover**
- social norms

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Use a randomized controlled trial (RCT ) in the Bangladeshi garment sector

- 2,000 female workers randomised in four groups:
  1. group receiving Treatment 1
  2. group receiving Treatment 2
  3. group receiving Treatment 1 + Treatment 2
  4. group not receiving anything (control)
- comparing outcomes across groups allows to establish causal relationship

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Economics questions and econometric tools 😊!

# Experimental Design

Two treatments, fully cross-randomized 2x2 design

1. Information Sessions → relax information constraint graphic
  - 45-minutes session on importance of hygienic MHM (by experienced NGO)
2. Free sanitary pads → relax financial constraint graphic
  - Free pack of 8 sanitary pads per month, over 7 months
  - Collected at medical room of factories

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    - Collected at medical room of factories
- ▶ Variation in gender of distributor → relax stigma constraint graphic

Results (preliminary)

# Summary of results (preliminary)

- **Stigma constraint does not bind:**
  - workers collect pads at equal rates from male/female distributor
- **Financial constraint binds:**
  - **pads adoption** rates increase by 10-19 p.p.
  - **willingness to pay** increases by 8%
  - **absenteeism** decreases by 25%
- **Information constraint binds:**
  - **pads adoption** rates increase by 6-14 p.p.
  - **absenteeism** decreases by 31%
  - **own behaviour & social norms:** positive effect on eating with husband and drying cloth outside
- No significant results yet on Overtime, Earnings, Turnover rates, Well-being, other Norms

Self-reported Pad Use

Pads Uptake

Labour Market Outcomes

WTP

Social Norms

Well-being



# Implications

## Implications for Businesses

- Providing free pads and information sessions seems to reduce absenteeism
- Rationale for inducing factory owners and managements to finance such interventions
- The reduced absenteeism would sufficiently increase worker productivity to pay for the relatively low costs of pads:
  - using data from a larger set of factories we estimate 1 std. dev. reduction in daily absenteeism increases daily output by 0.065 std. dev.
  - 20% reduction of absenteeism would increase output by 0.8%
  - absolute lower bound on revenue per worker factories must make (wage): 115\$
  - output increase of 0.8% implies a revenue increase of 0.92\$ per worker-month
  - pack of 8 pads costs 0.42\$ for wholesale
  - positive profit margin

## Implications for Policy Actors/Donors

- Providing free pads and information sessions seems to reduce adherence to harmful taboos around menstruation
- Rationale for other policy actors to include these policies in their portfolios
- No evidence of stigma/taboo related constraints
  - policy actors can focus on designing cost-effective information and pad provision interventions and worry less that perceived cultural barriers could hamper their effectiveness (in the workplace)

# Thank you

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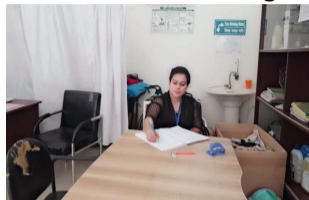
Note: Please do not take pictures.

## Package of Pads



Note: Please do not take pictures.

## Variation in distributor gender



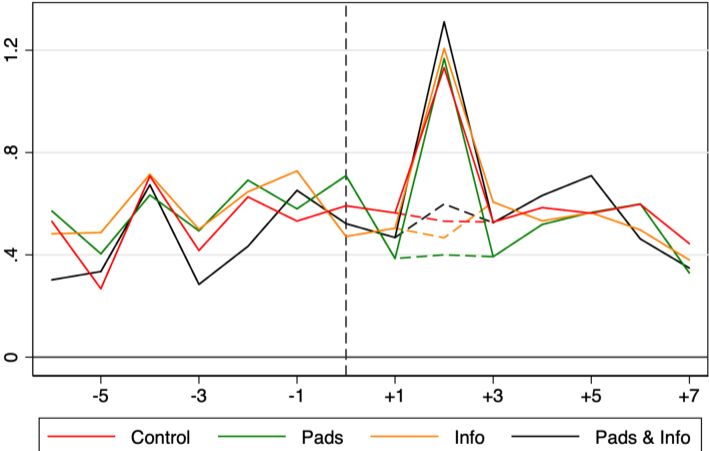
# Factories



Note: picture taken from NYT, not factories from our study.

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# Absent Days: Time Series of Average Worker Absenteeism



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# Introduction: Literature

Growing literature on effect of menstrual health management on educational achievements among female adolescent

- Oster and Thornton (2011,2012): RCT in rural Nepal
- Public Health: Large set of descriptive, survey based studies
- Montgomery et al. (2012,2016): Basic CTs in Ghana and Uganda

⇒ Effects of MHM interventions vary with baseline situation.

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⇒ Effects of MHM interventions vary with baseline situation.

No equivalent literature on working women in poor countries (exception is Krenz & Strulik (2019) based on survey data from Burkina Faso)

- MHM translates more directly into earnings, etc.
- Possibly affects women that did not go to school.
- Increasing number of NGOs now active, but no rigorous evaluations.

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Some (inconclusive) non-experimental literature in Western countries

- Ichino and Moretti (2009), Rockoff & Herrmann (2012), Sullivan (2011).

# Balance Test

	Control	Diff. Pads	Diff. Info	Diff. Pads+Info	N
<i>Demographics</i>					
Age	23.76	0.52	0.50	0.03	1,000
Years education	6.75	0.02	0.26	0.36	1,000
Married	0.82	0.02	0.00	-0.03	1,000
Children	0.83	0.08	0.06	-0.01	1,000
Age youngest child	5.91	0.23	-0.35	-0.15	632
Grade	4.67	0.08	0.00	0.06	1,000
Commute means	1.13	0.03	0.03	0.04	1,000
Commute time	14.53	.928	1.352	0.16	1,000
House type	4.06	-0.15	-0.10	-0.23**	1,000
House people	1.58	-0.04	-0.06	0.01	1,000
Bath share	.552	-.032	-.048	-.004	1,000
<i>MHM</i>					
Use cloth	0.47	0.00	0.02	0.06	1,000
Use tissue	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000
Use rag	0.06	-0.02	-0.03	0.01	1,000
Use pad	0.48	0.03	0.04	0.00	1,000
<i>Knowledge of MHM</i>					
Fungus and pads	2.02	0.02	0.00	-0.02	1,000
Dry cloth outside	2.14	0.02	-0.01	-0.03	1,000
Pad vs. cloth capacity	2.04	0.02	0.00	0.00	1,000

# Balance Test continued

	Control	Diff. Pads	Diff. Info	Diff. Pads+Info	N
<i>Absenteeism</i>					
Period pain	0.10	0.04	0.04	0.00	1,000
Lack of MHM products	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000
Afraid of leakage	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000
<i>Willingness to pay</i>					
WTP (in BDT)	29.87	-0.34	-0.34	0.10	987
<i>Urinary Tract Infection</i>					
UTI ever	2.74	-0.02	-0.01	.04	983
UTI missed days	2	-1.32	-.84	-1.5	93
<i>Subjective Well-being</i> (1 "comp. agree"-4 "comp. disagree")					
Feel more tired	1.79	0.07	0.04	0.11	1,000
Harder achieve work target	2.14	-0.07	-0.03	0.03	1,000
Feel ashamed	2.28	0.04	0.14*	0.21**	1,000
Proud to be woman	1.50	0.00	0.08	-0.02	1,000
Afraid of leakage	2.35	0.02	0.09	0.00	1,000
Afraid of odor	2.67	-0.02	0.02	0.02	1,000
Full of energy	2.59	-0.06	0.00	0.00	1,000
Feel alone	3.26	-0.04	0.13*	-0.01	1,000
Feel irritated	2.02	-0.16*	-0.11	-0.04	1,000

## Balance Test continued

	Control	Diff. Pads	Diff. Info	Diff. Pads+Info	N
<i>Social Norms</i>					
<i>(1 "very appr."-4 "very inappr.")</i>					
Cook dinner	1.33	0.02	-0.01	-0.02	1,000
Eat with husband	1.19	0.06	-0.01	0.00	1,000
Eat with females family	1.19	-0.02	-0.07	-0.01	1,000
Eat with other males	1.64	-0.03	-0.04	-0.12	1,000
Go to mosque	3.98	-0.02	0.00	0.01	1,000
Go to market	2.30	0.04	0.14*	0.00	1,000
Go to work	1.24	0.03	0.02	-0.03	1,000
Use cloth as MHM	2.86	0.06	0.08	0.06	1,000
Use pad as MHM	1.04	0.04	0.00	0.00	1,000
Buy pad alone	1.39	-0.03	-0.02	0.01	1,000
Talk period to mother	1.09	-0.04*	-0.06***	-0.06***	1,000
Talk period to husband	1.08	-0.04	-0.03	-0.02	1,000
Dry cloth openly	2.80	-0.02	-0.06	-0.03	1,000

# Attrition Baseline to Endline Survey

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Dependent Variable: Leave Factory							
Indep. Var:	Pad Treatm.	Inform. Treatm.	Willingn. to pay	Age	Educat.	Married	Children	Dry Pads Outside
	-0.006 (0.025)	-0.018 (0.025)	-0.000 (0.002)	-0.004 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.005)	-0.020 (0.037)	-0.037 (0.034)	0.005 (0.028)
x Free Pads			0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.003)	-0.016 (0.027)	0.013 (0.031)	0.002 (0.015)
x Info Treatm.			-0.000 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.029 (0.027)	-0.024 (0.031)	-0.011 (0.015)
Observations	1,000	1,000	999	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Factory FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

# Pads Usage Determinants

Determinants		Determinants	
Demogr.	Grade Age (-) <b>Education (+)</b> Married Children	Absenteeism  WTP	<b>Period pain (+)</b> Lack MHM product Afraid leakage  Wtp
Living Arr.	<b>House type</b> Persons living with <b>Bath shared (-)</b>	Social Norms	Cook dinner Eat with husband <b>Eat with female family (-)</b> Eat with other males Go to mosque <b>Go to market (+)</b> Go to work <b>Use cloth as MHM (-)</b> Use pad as MHM <b>Buy pad alone(+)</b> Talk period to mother Talk period to husband Dry cloth open
Info MHM	Fungus and pads Dry cloth outside <b>Pad vs cloth capacity (-)</b>		
Subj. Well-being	Feel more tired <b>Harder work target (+)</b> Feel ashamed Proud be woman Afraid leakage <b>Afraid odor (-)</b> Full of energy Feel alone Feel irritated		

Notes: Each block corresponds to a single regression. Bold variables have statistically significant coefficients.



# Pads Collection - Determinants

Dependent Variable:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Collect Free Pads (months)				
Information Session		0.349 (0.215)	0.532* (0.282)	0.686*** (0.250)	0.895*** (0.337)
Information Session × Use Pads Baseline			-0.401 (0.439)		-0.450 (0.518)
Information Session with Stigma Module				-0.669** (0.292)	-0.696* (0.386)
Information Session with Stigma Module × Use Pads Baseline					0.044 (0.607)
Use Pads Baseline	0.146 (0.222)	0.171 (0.221)	0.366 (0.315)	0.164 (0.220)	0.372 (0.316)
Age	0.049* (0.028)	0.050* (0.027)	0.051* (0.028)	0.054** (0.027)	0.055** (0.028)
Years of Schooling	-0.020 (0.038)	-0.024 (0.038)	-0.024 (0.038)	-0.026 (0.038)	-0.026 (0.038)
Married	-0.138 (0.303)	-0.109 (0.304)	-0.103 (0.305)	-0.111 (0.302)	-0.103 (0.303)
Children	-0.014 (0.274)	-0.009 (0.274)	-0.033 (0.277)	-0.036 (0.273)	-0.062 (0.276)
Village Born	0.930 (0.771)	0.940 (0.783)	0.895 (0.777)	1.001 (0.823)	0.950 (0.818)
Willingness to Pay	-0.031** (0.013)	-0.032** (0.013)	-0.031** (0.013)	-0.032** (0.013)	-0.031** (0.013)
Mean Collection Rate	3.761				
Factory FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	482				

# Survey - Social Norms (Baseline)

A woman in Bangladesh has her period and...

	Food				Activities		
	Cook dinner	Eat with husband	Eat with females family	Eat with other males	Go to mosque	Go to market	Go to work
Pad users	-0.002 (0.02)	0.000 (0.02)	-0.028** (0.01)	0.013 (0.02)	-0.000 (0.00)	0.074** (0.03)	-0.004 (0.01)
Mean(Non pad users)	0.890	0.934	0.966	0.808	0.006	0.445	0.946
Observations	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

	Menstrual Health Management					
	Use cloth	Use pad	Buy pad	Talk to mother	Talk to husband	Dry cloth outside
Pad users	-0.179*** (0.03)	0.002 (0.01)	0.042** (0.02)	0.004 (0.01)	0.004 (0.01)	-0.034 (0.03)
Mean(Non pad users)	0.419	0.986	0.884	0.986	0.986	0.401
Observations	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

# Menstruation and Subjective Well-being (Baseline)

When I have my period...

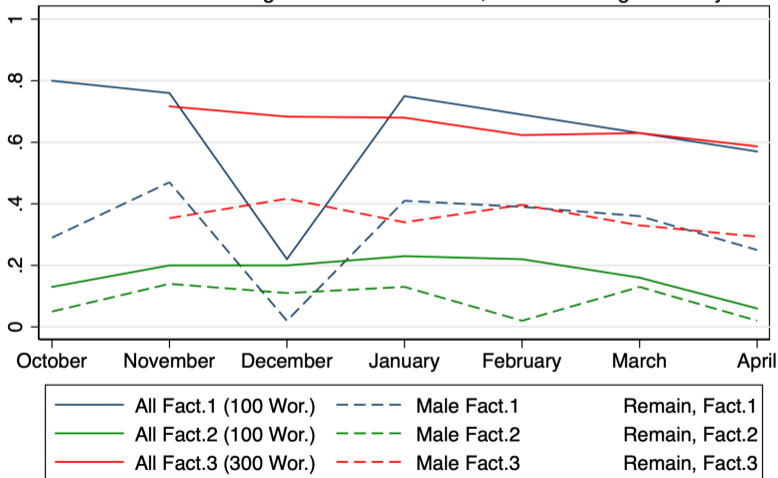
	More tired	Harder work target	Feel ashamed	Proud to be woman	Afraid of leak	Afraid of odor	Full of energy	Feel Alone	Feel Irritated
Non pad users:	0.788	0.675	0.649	0.894	0.585	0.489	0.503	0.202	0.731
Diff., pad users	0.037 (0.03)	0.059** (0.03)	-0.017 (0.03)	-0.006 (0.02)	-0.020 (0.03)	-0.050 (0.03)	-0.018 (0.03)	0.005 (0.03)	0.031 (0.03)
Observations	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000

# Pad Collection: No effect of distributor's gender

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## Share Worker Collecting Pads Each Month

W/ Share Collecting from Male Distributor, and remaining at factory



# Self-reported Pad Use at endline survey [Back](#)

	(1)	(2)
Free Pads	0.100*** (0.029)	0.189*** (0.047)
Free Pads × Use Pads Baseline		-0.200*** (0.055)
Information Session	0.060* (0.031)	0.136*** (0.051)
Information Session × Use Pads Baseline		-0.167*** (0.059)
Free Pads & Information Session	0.105*** (0.029)	0.165*** (0.048)
Free Pads & Information Session × Use Pads Baseline		-0.138*** (0.052)
Mean Control Group endline	0.83	0.83
Factory FE	Y	Y
Worker Controls	Y	Y
Observations	856	856
Sample	all	all

Notes: Use pads at baseline: 41% of workers use pads "always", 49% "never", 10% "sometimes".

- Increase in pad use by 13-19 percentage points
- Positive effect of all treatments combinations

## WTP for pads at endline [Back](#)

	(1)
Free Pads	1.764* (1.011)
Information Session	1.179 (1.007)
Free Pads & Information Session	-0.593 (1.040)
Use Pads Baseline	0.384 (0.740)
Mean Control Group:	21.71
Factory FE	Y
Surveyor FE	Y
Worker Controls	Y
Observations	758

Notes: Becker-DeGroot-Marschak incentive-compatible method.

→ Increase of 8% with Free Pads treatment

# HR Data based outcomes [Back](#)

Dependent Variable:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Absent	Overtime	Earnings	Earnings	Stay at Factory
Free Pads	-0.133* (0.076)	-0.806 (0.642)	165.986* (96.153)	127.146 (95.277)	0.028 (0.035)
Information Session	-0.170** (0.085)	-0.727 (0.691)	101.871 (95.120)	50.744 (93.446)	0.052 (0.034)
Free Pads & Info Sessions	0.027 (0.080)	-0.964 (0.687)	-32.105 (100.057)	-27.422 (97.176)	0.038 (0.035)
Absent				-280.2*** (11.68)	
Mean Control Group:	0.550	29.53	9710.5	9710.5	0.796
Factory-Month FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Worker FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Factory FE					Y
Observations	11,977	11,977	11,726	11,726	997

→ Reduction in absenteeism of 24-31% fewer absent days at work

→ Positive effects of single treatments

# Own Behaviour and Social Norms beyond work-place

	Own Behaviour	Social Norms
Free pads	X	X
Info session	✓ eat with family, dry cloth outside	✓ dry cloth outside
Info session + Free pads	✓ eat with family, dry cloth outside	✓ eat with family, dry cloth outside

Notes: Behaviour and Norms not changed are cooking, going to the market, visit newborn, visit ill people. Behaviour (not norms) about going to religious sites negatively changed (results not clear).



# Own Behaviour and Social Norms beyond work-place [Back](#)

Dep. Variable:	Cook	Eat with Husband	Eat with Others	Religious Activity	Go to Market	Visit Sick	Visit Newborn	Dry Cloth Outside
<i>Note: positive coefficient means LESS adherence to restrictive social norm</i>								
<b>Panel 1: Self Reported Mobility</b>								
Free Pads	0.015 (0.084)	0.123 (0.083)		-0.146** (0.065)	-0.001 (0.099)	0.009 (0.101)	0.010 (0.114)	0.037 (0.071)
Info Session	0.107 (0.083)	0.188** (0.082)		-0.180*** (0.065)	0.104 (0.099)	0.074 (0.100)	0.045 (0.113)	0.135* (0.071)
Free Pads & Info Session	0.074 (0.084)	0.163** (0.083)		-0.127* (0.065)	0.080 (0.100)	0.059 (0.101)	0.151 (0.114)	0.142** (0.072)
Mean Control Group (scale 0-3):	2.50	2.40		0.30	1.88	1.72	1.43	0.18
Observations	851	851		851	850	851	851	851
<b>Panel 2: Descriptive Norms</b>								
Free Pads	-0.029 (0.053)	0.004 (0.059)	0.033 (0.081)	0.029 (0.020)	0.005 (0.065)	0.005 (0.070)	0.023 (0.083)	0.037 (0.048)
Info Session	-0.080 (0.050)	-0.004 (0.059)	0.023 (0.080)	0.004 (0.003)	0.119* (0.063)	0.070 (0.072)	0.092 (0.087)	0.182*** (0.063)
Free Pads & Info Session	0.058 (0.045)	0.125** (0.051)	0.191** (0.075)	0.000 (0.002)	0.051 (0.067)	-0.046 (0.074)	0.021 (0.087)	0.165*** (0.058)
Mean Control Group (scale 0-3):	2.79	2.72	2.26	0.00	2.08	2.21	1.97	0.11
Observations	758	758	758	758	758	758	758	758
Factory FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Surveyor FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Worker Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

# Self-reported Well-being at Work during Menstruation at endline Back

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Dep. Variable:	Less Tired	Easier to Reach Target	More Energetic	Feel Shame	Worry Leakage	Worry Odour	Feel Alone	Feel Irritated
Free Pads	0.001 (0.090)	-0.185** (0.089)	0.116 (0.083)	-0.085 (0.099)	-0.061 (0.095)	0.003 (0.087)	0.041 (0.083)	-0.026 (0.104)
Info Session	0.045 (0.089)	-0.000 (0.089)	0.213*** (0.082)	-0.055 (0.098)	0.099 (0.094)	0.016 (0.086)	-0.053 (0.082)	-0.010 (0.103)
Free Pads & Info Session	0.056 (0.090)	-0.048 (0.090)	0.129 (0.083)	-0.077 (0.100)	-0.052 (0.095)	-0.041 (0.087)	0.093 (0.083)	0.056 (0.104)
Factory FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Worker Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Surveyor FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	846	818	846	845	846	846	846	846

# Self-reported Well-being at Work during Menstruation at endline Back

Dep. Variable:	(1) Less Tired	(2) Easier to Reach Target	(3) More Energetic	(4) Feel Shame	(5) Worry Leakage	(6) Worry Odour	(7) Feel Alone	(8) Feel Irritated	(9) PCA Work Ease	(10) PCA Psych. Burden
Free Pads	0.001 (0.090)	-0.185** (0.089)	0.116 (0.083)	-0.085 (0.099)	-0.061 (0.095)	0.003 (0.087)	0.041 (0.083)	-0.026 (0.104)	-0.055 (0.112)	-0.045 (0.112)
Info Session	0.045 (0.089)	-0.000 (0.089)	0.213*** (0.082)	-0.055 (0.098)	0.099 (0.094)	0.016 (0.086)	-0.053 (0.082)	-0.010 (0.103)	0.084 (0.112)	-0.001 (0.112)
Free Pads & Info Session	0.056 (0.090)	-0.048 (0.090)	0.129 (0.083)	-0.077 (0.100)	-0.052 (0.095)	-0.041 (0.087)	0.093 (0.083)	0.056 (0.104)	0.064 (0.113)	-0.047 (0.118)
Factory FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Worker Controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Surveyor FE	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Observations	846	818	846	845	846	846	846	846	818	845