Together to Work? Effect of Travel Buddies on Women's Job Search in Urban India *

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Abstract

In India, many women are willing to work but do not actively seek jobs, partly due to restrictive social norms and widespread harassment that severely limit their mobility. To navigate these challenges, women rely on group travel and can often only travel with relatives or other women. We partner with five garment factories in North India to experimentally evaluate whether improving women's ability to travel together increases their participation in job interviews. We implement a *Travel Buddy* treatment, where women were invited to interviews on the same days via group meetings to encourage group travel. Our results show that this treatment increases interview participation by 80-90% compared to inviting women to interviews individually or on different dates. The treatment also improved women's job search beyond the experiment: women were 75% more likely to look for jobs and made twice as many job search trips. We show that women have a preference to travel with companions but are constrained in their ability to do so effectively. However, connecting them with other women living nearby can help overcome the barriers to traveling together and thus, seeking jobs.

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1 Introduction

In many low and middle-income countries, women work less, earn less, and face greater job insecurity than men (Bjorvatn et al., 2022). The gendered differences are particularly pronounced in India, where despite substantial economic growth and recent strides toward gender parity in educational attainment (The World Bank, 2023), the female employment rate is only at 33%. This is extreme even within the developing world[1], and is comparable to countries like Saudi Arabia. Enabling Indian women to engage in paid work is, therefore, a pressing issue that requires a deeper understanding of its causes.

While many Indian women are deeply disconnected from the labor markets [2], a significant proportion express a willingness to work without actively seeking jobs (Fletcher et al., 2017). Lack of reliable transport (Field and Vyborny, 2022) and gender of supervisor (Subramanian, 2024) are some factors that affect women's job search in this context. In this paper, we examine another such factor to explain the disconnect between their interest and job search — women's reliance on companions when traveling.

Women face restricted mobility in many parts of the world due to widespread harassment and pervasive social norms (Kondylis et al., 2020; Aguilar et al., 2021). In India, where this study is based, 79% of women report experiencing harassment in public spaces, and 95% feel unsafe on public transport (ActionAid, 2016; Safetipin, 2019). As a result, women are often hesitant and unable to travel freely (Biswas, 2023). However, women overcome these challenges by traveling with other women or family members. So much so that many women can often only travel with companions when venturing out. For instance, 43-44% of women in India reported that they can't travel short distances or outside of their neighborhoods alone (DHS, 2019-21; IHDS, 2011-12).

This paper posits that when a woman prefers to travel only with companions and no one is available, she may forgo opportunities to visit employers or attend job interviews. Building on this, we examine the impact of women's behavior of traveling with companions on their job search. We ask: do women face challenges in finding companions when they need to travel? And, does enabling women to commute with other women improve their participation in job interviews and job search?

To answer these questions, we partnered with a garment manufacturing firm and its five factories in North India to evaluate an intervention promoting group travel among

[1] For example, labor force participation in Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding high-income countries) is 61% for women and 73% for men. Moreover, in low-income countries in South America, it is 52% for women and 75% for men.

[2] Women may be disconnected from the labor market due to many factors such as intra-household and intra-personal constraints (McKelway, 2021; Lowe and McKelway, 2019), childcare (Baranov et al., 2020; Bjorvatn et al., 2022; Nandi et al., 2020; Hojman and Lopez Boo, 2022; Ho et al., 2023; Field et al., 2021), restrictive norms (Afridi et al., 2023; Dean and Jayachandran, 2019; Bernhardt et al., 2018; Bursztyn et al., 2020; Jalota and Ho, 2024; Khanna and Pandey, 2020; Agte and Bernhardt, 2023; Jayachandran, 2019), lack of access to jobs (Heath and Mushfiq Mobarak, 2015), among others.

women. At these factories, women makeup 70% of the production workforce and primarily work as sewing operators. The experiment took place in 106 lower-income neighborhoods near the factories and targeted women interested in working. Enumerators went door-to-door screening women in the neighborhoods and enrolled 693 women in the study sample based on specific criteria: women had to be not employed outside their homes, were interested in working at the partner factories, and were skilled in operating sewing machines. The sample thus represents women who are on the margin of employment and possess more skills than the average Indian woman out of the labor force. We coordinated with the factories to organize job interviews, requiring participants to show up at the factory gate, in line with their hiring policy.

Neighborhoods were stratified by city and distance to the nearest factory, and randomly assigned to one of the two treatments or a control group. The first treatment, "*Travel Buddy*", was designed to enable women from a neighborhood to travel together to job interviews at the closest partner factory. In these neighborhoods, women were informed about jobs and interviews through group meetings with other participants. Additionally, women were scheduled for interviews on the same dates at the nearest factory to encourage them to travel together. While this treatment is designed to test the effects of commuting together, the group meetings themselves could have additional effects, such as reducing familial resistance to women working or improving the job's amenity value if women prefer working alongside friends.[3] To separate these effects, we implemented a second treatment, *Peer Effect*, which is identical to the Travel Buddy intervention but with one key difference: women were scheduled for interviews on different dates. Although women in this treatment attended the group meetings with each other, staggered interview dates were assigned to discourage group travel.

We compare interview attendance of women from the Travel Buddy and Peer Effect neighborhoods with women from the *control* neighborhoods who were assigned to the same interview dates at the closest factories but were informed about the jobs and interviews via individual meetings with the enumerators. This design helps us assess whether women can commute together without external support. Our primary data comes from surveys conducted at the factory gates and an endline survey conducted six weeks post interviews.

Our main finding is that the Travel Buddy intervention led to a significant increase in the number of women participating in job interviews at the partner factories. In the control group, 15.4% of women took part in the job interviews, matching their engagement in job search at baseline. In comparison, women in the Travel Buddy group had a 12.4 percentage points higher interview participation rate. In other words, inviting women to participate in interviews in groups on the same dates rather than individually increased the

[3] Grosset and Donald, 2024 find that having peer networks at the same job is equivalent to raising wages by 13-20%.

likelihood of women participating by an impressive 80%. These results are consistent with McKelway, 2021, who finds an 11-percentage points increase in women's job sign-up in response to an information intervention in India; and, Grosset and Donald, 2024, who find a 15 percentage points increase in job acceptance rate if job seekers' social connections are also offered jobs in Côte d'Ivoire.

As mentioned above, the Travel Buddy intervention could work through multiple channels. To isolate the effect of commuting together, we compare interview show-up rates of Travel Buddy and Peer Effect groups. The Travel Buddy treatment increased participation in interviews by 12.7 percentage points, representing a 90% increase over the Peer Effect group average show-up rate. Moreover, the women in Peer Effect actually show up less than the control group. This provides strong evidence that the effects of the Travel Buddy intervention are indeed driven by allowing women to commute together to interviews.

Our second set of findings shows that the Travel Buddy intervention significantly increased the likelihood of women traveling to the job site together. 9.6% of women from the control group and 6.25% from the Peer Effect group traveled to the factory with other study women. Travel Buddy intervention doubled and tripled this proportion, respectively. This suggests that the two treatments worked as intended: Travel Buddy treatment increased women's likelihood of commuting together, and the Peer Effect group discouraged women from doing so. Moreover, consistent with our priors and existing data, 83% of interviewees from the control group traveled to the factory with companions out of which 63% did so with fellow study participants. Taken together with the higher interview attendance in the Travel Buddy group, this result strongly suggests that women have a preference to travel with companions but face constraints in coordinating group travel on their own.

We provide evidence that the Travel Buddy intervention improved women's ability to commute together by connecting them to more women from their neighborhoods. For women with below-median number of peers[4] at baseline, the Travel Buddy treatment significantly increased their show-up rate relative to the control and Peer Effect groups. This subgroup was less likely to attend interviews (by 10-11 percentage points). However, the Travel Buddy treatment helps reduce this gradient, while the Peer Effect treatment further increases the gap. Notably, the two interventions increased women's reported number of peers and their interactions during endline surveys. The magnitude of Travel Buddy treatment is larger, but the two effects are not statistically different from each other. However, we find that Travel Buddy treatment significantly increased women's instances of traveling outside with their peers six weeks post-intervention relative to Peer Effect and control groups. We conjecture that traveling with women initially for the interviews helped cement travel arrangements between women later on.

Our third set of results shows that the Travel Buddy intervention had positive effects on job search beyond the job interview experiment. Though the two treatments modestly

[4]Here, we define peers as the number of women that study participants knew near their houses.

increased women's employment at the partner factories, the overall hiring rate was quite low, primarily because many women did not pass the sewing trials. However, we expected that once women were introduced to the concept of traveling together and connected to other women seeking jobs, they would continue to travel together and look for jobs outside the experiment. Indeed, this is what we find. We find that the Travel Buddy treatment increased the likelihood of women looking for jobs six weeks post-interviews by 12 percentage points, a 75% increase over the control mean of 16%. The treatment also more than doubled the average number of trips made by women in the control group (0.3 trips). Women in the Travel Buddy group were 11 percentage points more likely to have made these job search trips with other women from their neighborhoods, compared to 7.4% in the control group. The Peer Effect treatment had a positive albeit smaller impact on the extensive margin and a similar impact on the intensive margin as Travel Buddy. However, only 2% of the women made these trips accompanied by other women from the neighborhood. These findings highlight that by facilitating group travel, the intervention not only improved access to job interviews but also their ongoing job-seeking efforts. It further reaffirms that the initial experience of traveling together for interviews led women to continue relying on each other for subsequent trips.

We also present somewhat more speculative evidence that the effects of Travel Buddy treatment effects are partly driven by reducing women's travel costs to the factory, for instance, by allowing women to split travel costs by booking a private vehicle or by carpooling. Using a pilot experiment in Selaqui, India, with 15 neighborhoods and 139 women, we show that providing travel subsidies to cover round trip costs to the factory produces effects nearly half as strong as those of the Travel Buddy treatment, which offered no cash incentive. Compared to control group's 10% interview participation rate, the Travel Buddy treatment increased interview participation rate by 18 percentage points, while travel subsidy treatment led to a 9 percentage points increase. This comparison suggests that while some of the Travel Buddy effects may be driven by reducing travel costs for women, it cannot explain the effects entirely.

All in all, our results suggest that increasing women's ability to commute together can significantly improve their job search outcomes, especially if they are on the margin of employment. We also show that women have a preference to travel accompanied and are constrained in their ability to do so effectively. But, introducing them to women closer to their homes can help overcome the barriers to traveling together.

Our paper adds to the literature on barriers to job search in developing countries (e.g., Abebe et al., 2021; Abebe et al., 2023; Franklin, 2018; Caria et al., 2020; Wheeler et al., 2022). Several studies within this field focus on barriers specifically faced by women. For instance, studies show that norms against women's work (Afridi et al., 2023) and the gender of supervisors (Subramanian, 2024) can have a direct impact on women's decisions to apply for jobs online. Furthermore, women's strong preferences for non-wage amenities (Ho et al., 2023;

Mahmud and Riley, 2021; Becerra and Guerra, 2021), and employers' gendered preferences (Chaturvedi et al., 2024; Chowdhury et al., 2018; Gentile et al., 2023; Buchmann et al., 2023) can indirectly affect women's job search by limiting available job opportunities (Crepon et al., 2024). The closest study to our work is Field and Vyborny, 2022, which shows that providing women-only transport services to commute daily from work significantly increases women's online job applications in Pakistan. Our study differs from this study and other existing works in its novel, cost-effective approach to improving women's mobility - by enabling women to travel together, and its focus on in-person interview show-up decisions and visits to employers, a dimension not yet explored within this literature.

We also contribute to the growing literature examining women's physical mobility constraints and their economic implications. Safety concerns and societal norms compel women to adopt coping strategies (Borker, 2024), such as using gender-segregated transportation (Aguilar et al., 2021; Field and Vyborny, 2022), avoiding unsafe routes (Borker, 2021), and refraining from travel during specific hours (Hsu, 2011) to mitigate these risks.[5] These strategies not only limit women's freedom of movement but also impose additional monetary costs (Kondylis et al., 2020; Christensen and Osman, 2021) and negatively impact their decisions regarding college admissions (Borker, 2021) and enrollment in educational and skill training programs (Muralidharan and Prakash, 2017; Cheema et al., 2022). Our paper extends this literature by demonstrating that traveling together—another strategy used by women to navigate mobility challenges—can actually improve labor market outcomes, specifically participation in job interviews and making job search trips. We show that inviting women in groups to participate in job interviews significantly boosts their participation rates. This is particularly relevant to the manufacturing sector, where recruitment predominantly occurs through in-person visits at factory sites. Additionally, our study provides evidence that commuting together can help reduce travel costs for women, contrasting with other coping strategies that tend to increase costs. This is related to existing studies that show that while high commuting costs can affect migration (Phillips, 2014), job search (Franklin, 2018), and input take-up (Aggarwal et al., 2022; Naresh Kumar et al., 2023), providing cash benefits in terms of travel or input subsidies can help reduce these gradients. We provide preliminary evidence that commuting together can help reduce travel costs for women.

This paper also advances the literature on the role of peers in developing countries. Existing studies have shown that peer networks can improve outcomes in education (Rao, 2019; Duflo et al., 2011), entrepreneurship (Field et al., 2016), family planning (Anukriti et al., 2022) and female autonomy (Kandpal and Baylis, 2019). This study contributes to the existing literature by examining how peers can enhance women's participation in job interviews by easing mobility constraints and reducing travel costs. It reaffirms the find-

[5] 42% of women in our study sample reported not traveling after sunset compared to 13% who avoided travel during the day.

ings of Afridi et al., 2023, which show that friends-based networks improved women's labor market outcomes in urban India. Recent work by Grosset and Donald, 2024 documents complementarities in labor supply, finding that job seekers are more likely to accept offers if people in their network are also offered jobs, primarily due to their ability to commute together. Our research adds to this literature by showing that such complementarities exist even during job search and interview participation in a completely different study context. In addition to strengthening their social networks and providing a platform for the delivery of information (Neha Kumar et al., 2019; Díaz-Martin et al., 2023), we show that organizing women into groups can improve their participation in job interviews and increase their trips to employers.

In what follows, we present the study setting and context for the experiment (section 2), including details about the partner factories. We then proceed to describe experiment and treatment design (section 3). In section 4, we describe data collection and empirical strategy and in section 5 we discuss results of the experiment. Finally, section 6 summarizes and concludes the paper.

2 Study Setting

The experiment takes place in two cities in Northern India - Faridabad and Noida. This section provides an overview of women's job search and mobility in India, followed by details on the partner firm.

2.1 Context: Women's Job Search and Mobility

Despite India's significant economic growth and improvement in educational attainment over the past two decades, the country's female labor force participation rate hasn't increased much [6]. In 2024, only 33% of India's female population was engaged in the labor market, compared to 77% of men (ILOSTAT, 2023). [7] This puts India among the countries with the lowest female labor force participation rates globally, ahead of only a few nations. While other South Asian countries, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, also have low female labor force employment, they have seen a steady increase over the last decade. India's stagnant and often declining participation rates have presented itself as a puzzle to researchers and policymakers.

This study is conducted in 106 lower income neighborhoods in Faridabad and Noida. Faridabad serves as an industrial hub for the state of Haryana, with garment manufacturing being one of its prominent industries. Noida is a software development and industrial

[6] Between 2000 and 2023, India's GDP grew at an average rate of 4.65%, primary school enrollment rose from 89% to 99%, and secondary school enrollment also increased steeply from 50% to 79% (The World Bank, 2023), reaching parity between boys and girls.

[7] Since the 2000s, the women's employment rate has been steadily declining. However, there has been an upward trend since 2021, with an increase from 26% to 33% (ILOSTAT, 2023) primarily due to a change in the definition of employment in rural areas.

hub in the state of Uttar Pradesh. 21% and 18% of women reported participating in the labor market in Faridabad and Noida (DHS, 2019-21).

Women in our setting express a desire to work but often do not actively seek jobs. All women in the study sample were interested in working, as this was an eligibility criterion. Yet, at baseline, only 16% of women in the control group had searched for jobs in the past two weeks. Women generally reported actively searching for jobs less frequently than men, with men spending an average of 10 days searching compared to just 5.5 days for women. Furthermore, men were more likely to find desirable jobs, with 75% finding their preferred jobs, compared to only 30% of women. Additionally, a significant portion of women reported not knowing where to look for jobs compared to men. This descriptive data highlights substantial gender disparities in job search, with women facing distinct challenges in finding employment. These difficulties are not unique to our study; similar patterns have been observed in other lower-income countries. For instance, Field and Vyborny, 2022 documented a comparable disconnect between job interest and active job searching among women in Pakistan.

In this paper, we hypothesize that these job search challenges are closely tied to the limited physical mobility faced by women in this context. We find stark mobility differences between men and women: women reported traveling outside their neighborhoods an average of 0.37 times in the past week, while men did so 0.93 times. The gap widens further among those not working, with women making only 0.33 trips compared to 1.83 trips by men. Additionally, the frequency and cost of travel differ significantly across genders, with unemployed women making fewer trips and facing higher transportation costs. While men reported more safety issues when traveling, women were more likely to avoid travel altogether due to potential safety concerns.

Despite the selected nature of the sample, the reported mobility of these women was similar to the evidence presented previously. 70% of women in our sample reported traveling with friends or family to mitigate safety concerns. A significant proportion (47%) of women traveled with companions in the past week, and 41% did so during their most recent trip. Beyond relying on companions, women employed various coping strategies to address safety concerns, such as avoiding unsafe areas, refraining from using shared modes of transport like shared autorickshaws and buses to avoid traveling with strangers, and keeping their phones connected while traveling. These strategies, while necessary for safety, further restrict women's mobility and, by extension, their ability to engage in job search actively.

2.2 Partner Firm

We partner with one of India's largest exporters of ready-made garments and its five factories in Faridabad and Noida. The firm employs over 70,000 women (about 70%) across more than fifty factories all over India. Two out of five factories are located in Faridabad,

and three are in Noida[8].

In our partner factories, women form about 66% ($\approx 9,800$) of the total production workforce, with 46% of women employed as sewing operators. The average salary of a worker involved in production ranges from INR 10,500 - INR 13,500 ($128-$160) per month for a 6-day work week, slightly above the prevailing minimum wage. There is currently only one shift at the factories from Monday to Saturday, 9 am to 5:30 pm. On average, women workers in the production workforce are 35 years old, married, 8th-grade educated, have one child, and have been employed with the partner firm for three years.

Hiring for the workforce takes place through walk-in interviews at the factory gates. Typically, interviews are held at 9 am, just before the production for the day begins. Women are expected to show up at the factory gate by 10 am if they want to be considered during the day's hiring process. Post 10 am, no interviews take place, and women are returned from the factory gate. To ensure that we do not miss collecting data for women showing up late to the factories, an enumerator was present at the factories throughout the day. There are three stages within the interview process. First, the HR department conducts a screening of candidates. During this screening process, the HR checks IDs for age verification engages in a few minutes of conversation to gauge the nature of the women, checks for literacy, and enquires about women's prior work experience and skills training. After passing the screening, women disclose their preferred production roles, e.g., sewing and finishing. Following this, production floor supervisors conduct trials with women. This includes a series of tasks related to the women's preferred job type. [9] A trial usually lasts about 30 to 45 minutes. The floor supervisor determines the outcome of the trial. Based on their performance during the trial, a woman can either pass or not pass the trial. If a woman passes the trial, she is offered a salary based on her skill level. The HR department completes the formalities for hiring the next day, and women typically start working the day after.

Our job interview experiment follows the exact hiring process undertaken by the partner factories with only one difference: women in our study sample were provided with an *interview invitation* letter. In this invitation letter, we included interview dates and the address of the closest partner factory. It's also important to note that there was no added benefit of the letters at the factories. Also, despite assigning interview dates and factories, women could show up at any date or factory other than the one mentioned in their letter and still be considered for jobs.

[8] Figure B1 shows the map of factory locations. The Faridabad factory units, referred to as F1 and F2, are 850 meters apart. The A5 and A7 factory units in Noida are near one another and are 50 meters apart. The distance between E10 and pair A5-A7 is approximately 12 kilometers by road.

[9] For instance, the floor supervisors usually ask workers trying out for helper jobs to iron or fold clothes, and tasks related to stitching are assigned to workers trying out for sewing operator jobs.

3 Experimental Design

We conducted a neighborhood-level randomized controlled trial to evaluate the effects of women commuting together on their participation in job interviews at the partner factories. 106 neighborhood across the two cities were randomly assigned to one of three groups: Control, Travel Buddy, or Peer Effect. Randomization of the neighborhoods was stratified by city and distance of the neighborhoods to the closest partner factory. As a result, 33 neighborhoods were assigned to the control group, 36 were assigned to the Travel Buddy treatment, and 37 were assigned to the Peer Effect treatment. Figure 1 visualizes the experimental design and Table A1 presents the timeline for the experiment.

This section includes details on randomization, sample recruitment, interventions, and treatment take-up.

3.1 Neighborhoods and Randomization

The neighborhoods served as catchment areas for screening and enrolling women to the study sample. A team of surveyors defined and mapped the neighborhood boundaries prior to the start of the experiment by visiting the study areas on foot. Each neighborhood contained around 150 housing structures and approximately 200 households. Neighborhood boundaries were drawn utilizing existing geographical features such as main roads, highways, parks, and fields. In cases where it was not feasible to create natural boundaries, paved roads, non-residential buildings and local landmarks were used. To minimize cross-neighborhood contamination of the interventions, we ensured that no two neighborhoods shared a boundary and established buffer zones between them. [10]

Randomization was done at the neighborhood level. We implemented two levels of stratification. Since social norms, safety concerns, transportation networks, etc., can differ across the two cities, we stratified the neighborhoods by city. Distance to the partner factory can also impact a woman's decision to attend interviews, consequently, we also stratified neighborhoods by distance to the closest factory. We classified the neighborhoods into nine distance bins. The distance bins were defined using the distribution of distances from neighborhoods to minimize the number of misfits while randomization. [11] The distance bins are highly correlated with the cost of travel to the factory using shared auto-rickshaws ($corr = 0.51$) and private auto-rickshaws ($corr = 0.42$), two common modes of transport in the study context. Within a city-distance bin combination, we randomly assigned neighborhoods to one of the three groups. Table 1 presents the neighborhood characteristics

[10] As shown in Figure B2, mapping involved leaving multiple lanes of houses between two neighborhoods or using highways and non-residential buildings as separators. Figure B3 illustrates the neighborhoods near two partner factories.

[11] More specifically, the bins were defined as follows: distance bin = 1 if the distance from a neighborhood to the factory (d) $\leq$ 2km. distance bin = 2 if $2 < d \leq 3$; distance bin = 3 if $3 < d \leq 4$; distance bin = 4 if $4 < d \leq 5$; distance bin = 5 if $5 < d \leq 6$; distance bin = 6 if $6 < d \leq 7$; distance bin = 7 if $7 < d \leq 8$; distance bin = 8 if $8 < d \leq 11$ and distance bin = 9 if $11 < d \leq 13$.

and tests for balance across the three groups.

3.2 Sample Recruitment

Post randomization, starting in February 2024, enumerators conducted door-to-door screening of women to enroll them in the experiment. Enumerators identified eligible participants based on a set of predefined questions. To prevent spatial bias in participant recruitment, we employed random sampling procedures within the neighborhoods. [12] During the screening, locked households were not revisited and, hence, were not tested for eligibility.

To be eligible to participate in the study, women needed to satisfy all seven conditions: (1) be between the ages of 18-40 years, (2) have a government-issued ID, (3) can operate either an industrial sewing machine or home sewing machine, (4) not engaging in full-time or part-time work outside of their homes, (5) didn't work with our partner factory in the last 3 months (6) were interested in paid work outside of their homes[13] and (7) interested in working at an apparel factory. Criteria (1)-(3) are the hiring requirements of the partner factories, while criteria (4)-(5) help us target women who are more likely to face mobility constraints when engaging in paid work outside their homes. Criteria (6)-(7) ensured we recruit women who have expressed a willingness to work. After passing the screening exercise for the study, women were informed about the study procedures, and only those who consented were included in the study sample.

693 women across 106 neighborhoods were part of the study sample. On average, we included 7 women per neighborhood to the sample.Table A2 presents the baseline characteristics of the women and shows balance across the three groups. The average age of women at baseline was 28.7 years, and 80% of women were married. Only 11% of women worked in the past six months. Most of the women lived in nuclear households, with a number of household members averaging 3.5. Table A3 presents levels of baseline survey completion and tests for balance across treatment groups. We do not find evidence of selection into the sample based on treatment assignment[14].

[12] Prior to initiating recruitment, we mapped the lanes and entry points for each cluster (see Figure B4). A random entry point was then selected for each cluster, which served as the starting point for the sampling process. This approach ensured that houses closer to main or paved roads did not have a higher likelihood of being surveyed. Following the random selection of entry points, enumerators proceeded door-to-door along the designated lane to assess eligibility. They navigated the area using the right-hand rule to determine the subsequent lane for sampling.

[13] We asked women to express their willingness to work independently of their families' approval or disapproval. Therefore, if a woman indicated she was willing to work but was unsure whether her husband would allow it, she was still considered eligible.

[14] In the consent, we explicitly informed women about the three groups and the group they were assigned to.

3.3 Interventions

Women in the *Travel Buddy* and *Peer Effect* neighborhoods were invited to attend group meetings with other women from the same neighborhoods after completing the baseline surveys. These meetings were held in public spaces, such as under a tree or at the end of a housing lane. Typically, the meetings took place on the same day as the baseline surveys; however, in some cases, they occurred the following day. On average, we conducted two meetings per neighborhood, with four women present at each meeting.[15] In the *control* group, enumerators conducted one-on-one individual meetings with women after completing baseline surveys. This meant that the meeting took place in private, often inside women's houses, with only the enumerator and woman present. Female enumerators facilitated all of the research activities, including screening, surveys, and meetings.

During these meetings, women across the three groups were provided with detailed information about the walk-in interviews and hiring at the partner factories. This included details and salaries of different jobs available to them, work days and timings, policies on overtime, and the interview process. All women were invited to participate in the interviews conducted by the partner factories and were provided with an "invitation letter" (see Figure B5 for an example). This letter contained their name, factory's address, interview time, and most importantly, assigned interview dates. Each woman was assigned a 2-day interview window. Women could show up on either of the days for interview.[16] We also shared detailed travel instructions with women on how to get to the closest factory from their neighborhood. At the factory gate, the hiring process for the study participants was the same as the firm's hiring process in the absence of the study (see subsection 2.2 for details). Figure 1 presents key details about the two treatments and the control group.

3.3.1 Travel Buddy Treatment

If a woman prefers to travel with companions for safety reasons or due to societal expectations, the absence of available companions can hinder her ability to attend interviews or search for jobs. This limitation might restrict her job search to local opportunities, discourage her from seeking employment, or even compel her to forgo working outside the home altogether. The Travel Buddy intervention addresses these challenges by connecting women within the same neighborhood who are interested in working at the same location.

Within each Travel Buddy neighborhood, women in the study sample were invited to attend group meetings. These meetings began with the enumerators introducing themselves and leading ice-breaking activities. The enumerators then provided detailed information about job opportunities at the partner factory, the hiring process, and the logistics

[15] We piloted conducting one meeting per neighborhood. However, a majority of women refused to attend meetings more than 2-3 minutes walking distance away. Therefore, we decided to conduct multiple meetings per neighborhood (ideally two) to improve take-up.

[16] If women chose not to follow the dates assigned to them and showed up on different dates, they were still considered for the jobs.

of getting to the factory for the walk-in interviews. To facilitate commuting together, all women within a Travel Buddy neighborhood were assigned to the same two-day interview window and partner factory, and this information was shared with them during the meeting. This ensured that all participants in a group meeting were scheduled for interviews on the same days.[17] The enumerators also explained how traveling with other women for job interviews could enhance their safety and reduce objections from their families regarding the commute to the factory site. To further improve coordination, a WhatsApp group was created for women in each group meeting. About 44% of the women in the Travel Buddy treatment were part of these WhatsApp groups. The meeting concluded with time for the women to socialize and connect with each other.

In the control neighborhoods, enumerators conducted individual meetings with women after completing the baseline surveys and invited them to the interviews at the partner factories. To assess whether women could organize themselves for commuting together, all women in a control neighborhood were assigned to the same two-day interview window and partner factory, just like in the Travel Buddy treatment. However, they were not informed about the participation of other women from their neighborhoods in the study.[18] Additionally, we didn't discuss the idea of traveling together to prevent inducing demand effects. This approach allowed us to test whether women would independently identify others from the study and choose to commute with them to the factory.

3.3.2 Peer Effect Treatment

As mentioned previously, the Travel Buddy treatment combines two elements. First, it helps women find a travel buddy for commuting to interview, and second, it groups women from the same neighborhood together who are interested in working at the same employer. To isolate the impact of commuting together from other effects of organizing women into groups, we designed the Peer Effect treatment arm. In this treatment, women were still invited to group meetings with others from their neighborhood, but they were assigned different interview windows to prevent them from traveling together. However, it was still possible that women didn't follow the dates assigned to them and showed up together. In such a scenario, they were still considered for jobs at the factories.

Within a group meeting, each woman was randomly assigned to a unique 2-day window for job interviews at the factory. The dates were chosen so that no two women in a group meeting had overlapping interview dates.[19] This approach allowed women in the

[17] Interview windows varied across Travel Buddy neighborhoods based on when the baseline surveys were completed for all women within a neighborhood. As a result, interview windows were spread out between March and June 2024.

[18] Although we did not explicitly inform participants about the involvement of other women from their clusters, it is possible that some women became aware of it, as they often lived in multi-family dwellings and could observe surveyors going door-to-door to enroll others in the study.

[19] These interviews were scheduled on a rolling basis, starting one day after the group meeting. For instance, if four women attended a group meeting on June 20, 2024, one woman would be randomly assigned to interview on June 22 and June 23, another on June 24 and June 25, and so forth.

peer effect neighborhoods to have the same interactions and receive the same peer support as the women in the Travel Buddy neighborhoods but prevented them from accompanying each other to the factory site for interviews. We also created WhatsApp groups for each meeting mirroring the Travel Buddy treatment design. 57% of women from the Peer Effect were part of the WhatsApp groups.

3.4 Treatment Take-Up

In Travel Buddy and Peer Effect neighborhoods, we scheduled group meetings shortly after completing the baseline surveys to maximize participation. However, if a woman was unable to attend a scheduled meeting, we rescheduled it for a time when at least one other participant from the study could also attend. When rescheduling with others wasn't feasible, we held individual meetings with these women. During these individual meetings, we provided women with an interview invitation letter and assigned them to an interview window according to the research design. If a woman refused to attend the meetings after completing the baseline surveys, we didn't follow up with them for rescheduling.

Details of the intervention meetings held for the Travel Buddy and Peer Effect Groups are presented in Table A4. 95% of women in the Travel Buddy group and 93% of women in the Peer Effect treatment clusters attended the intervention meetings. 5-8% of women refused to participate in the meetings. 4% of women in the Travel Buddy group and 2% of women in the Peer Effect group attended the meeting alone. 11-13% of women participated in the meeting with just one other woman present. On average, 4.3 women were present in the Travel Buddy group meetings compared to 3.8 women in the Peer Effect group meetings. We test for balance in meeting attendance (Columns 1 and 2), if women attended the meeting alone (Columns 3 and 4), and the number of women present in a meeting (Columns 5-6) by treatment status in Table 2. We do not find any evidence of selective attendance of women.

4 Data and Empirical Specification

4.1 Data Collection

The empirical analysis relies on data from two sources: four rounds of survey data and official factory records on interviews and jobs at the factory. Using survey data, we collected data on various outcomes, such as attendance at walk-in interviews, job search trips, and interaction with women through four rounds of surveys. Three rounds of surveys - baseline, endline, and midline- were conducted with all study participants. However, the fourth round of survey - surveys at the factory site was conducted with women who showed up at the factory gates to participate in the interviews. The survey timeline is presented in Table A1. Female enumerators administered the surveys verbally. Baseline and endline surveys were conducted privately inside women's homes with only the enumerator and

the respondent present. In contrast, the factory-site surveys were administered inside a factory room, and midline surveys were administered over the phone.

The baseline surveys were conducted the same day after enrolling women in the study, collecting detailed data on household demographics, employment history, travel patterns, feeling of safety during commute, gender attitudes, existing social connections, and prevalent household norms. To measure instances of women searching for jobs, we collected data on the number of times they travel outside their homes to look for jobs. We elicited details of the most recent trips. To measure women's number of peers in the neighborhood, we asked women to identify the number of women they know living near their houses (within their multi-house dwellings, neighboring houses). We further collected information on whether they traveled with these women outside their homes in the last week and if they discussed household issues with them. To measure safety perceptions, we asked women to rate their feeling of safety when leaving their homes and commuting via different modes of transport.

The endline surveys were similar to the baseline surveys and were conducted six weeks after the end of the interview-day window. The recall period for job search questions during the endline surveys was 6 weeks, that is, post-factory interviews.

Factory site surveys recorded the primary outcome of the study: show-up for the interviews at the factory gate. Enumerators were present every day at all partner units to record information on study participants showing up for the interviews. They also completed a short survey with each study women that showed up to gather details about their commute to the factory such as their travel companions, mode of transport, travel cost, and time of commute. The midline-phone surveys were conducted two days after the completion of the interview window. They collected information on communication and the next steps taken by the women after they were provided with the interview invitation letters. Table A5 presents attrition levels for midline and endline surveys and tests for balance. We completed endline surveys with approximately 80% and midline surveys with 81% of the study sample. Endline attrition for the control group was 18% and 18.5% for the midline surveys. We find no evidence for selective attrition across all three groups.

We collected administrative data from the partner factory units to assess the effects of the interventions on women's likelihood of passing job trials, the outcomes of the trials, and accepting job offers.

4.2 Empirical Specification

The experimental design enables us to estimate the treatment effects of the two interventions. The primary specification estimates the Intent-to-Treat (ITT) effects of being assigned to either Travel Buddy or Peer effect treatments, relative to Control. It implements a comparison of means and estimates:

$$Y_{ins} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Travel Buddy}_n + \beta_2 \text{Peer Effect}_n + \gamma_1 X_i + \gamma_2 Z_n + \mu_s + \epsilon_{ins} \quad (1)$$

Y_{ins} is the outcome variable for women i in neighborhood n in stratum s. *Travel Buddy*$_n$ and *Peer Effect*$_n$ are indicator variables that equal one if woman i's neighborhood n was assigned to receive Travel Buddy treatment or Peer Effect treatment, respectively. X_i is a vector of baseline characteristics of women included in Table A2 [20]. We also include a vector of variables, Z_n, to control for neighborhood characteristics such as travel time and cost to the assigned factory included in Table 1. μ_s denote strata fixed effects[21]. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level. For both outcomes, participation rates in interviews and job search trips at Endline, we estimate the effects with and without individual and neighborhood controls. All regressions include stratum-fixed effects.

The primary outcome of interest is the interview show-up of the study participants and job search trips. Interview show-up is a binary indicator for whether a woman i showed up for interviews at the partner factories. Job search trips are also a binary indicator of whether a woman i made a job search trip in the last 45 days measured at the endline. We also measure the effects of the treatments on the number of job search trips made after factory interviews. The secondary outcomes are also binary variables that equal 1 if women show up with women from the group meeting or other non-study adults to the factory gate[22]. We also measure the effect on the job acceptance rate at the factory and the number and strength of peer networks.

To provide evidence on underlying mechanisms for the effects, we also estimate heterogeneous treatment effects by baseline measures of women's peer networks within the neighborhood and safety perceptions when traveling. We estimate the regression equation:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{ins} = {} & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Travel Buddy}_n + \beta_2 \text{Peer Effect}_n \\ & + \beta_3 \text{Travel Buddy}_n \times \text{Covariate}_{ins} + \beta_4 \text{Peer Effect}_n \times \text{Covariate}_{ins} \\ & + \beta_5 \text{Covariate}_{ins} + \gamma_1 X_i + \gamma_2 Z_n + \mu_s + \epsilon_{ins} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

Women's peer network is the total number of women they know in their buildings and their neighboring houses at baseline. $Covariate_{ins} = 1$ if the woman's total number of peers is less than the median number of peers for the study sample. To create a measure of women's feeling of safety, we use baseline responses to the three questions: How safe do you feel while traveling by the following means - auto, walking, and bus during daytime? Women

[20] It also includes an indicator variable which equals one if the woman joined the meetings' WhatsApp group.

[21] Strata are city-distance bin combinations, as discussed in subsection 3.1.

[22] This implies that the variables take the value of 0 if they don't show up for interviews or if they show-up alone.

rank their responses on a Likert scale - very less, less, neither less or more, more, a lot more. A higher score implies a higher feeling of safety. We take an average of the three responses. $Covariate_{ins}$= 1 if the average of the responses to the three modes is less than the median average for the study sample. We also calculate Treatment-on-Treated effects, where women are considered treated if they attended a group meeting with at least one more woman present.

5 Results

In what follows, we will first discuss the results of the Travel Buddy treatment on women's participation in interviews at the factories and effects on women's engagement in job search outside of the interview experiment. We then look at the effects on job take-up at the partner factories and connections with women living nearby. Finally, we explore different mechanisms that may help explain these effects.

5.1 Effects on Probability of Attending Interviews

We examine the effects of the Travel Buddy treatment on interview participation rates of women at the partner factories. These results are shown in Table 3. Columns 1 and 2 present the results for women's interview show-up rates, columns 3 and 4 present the results for showing up for interviews with fellow study participants, and columns 5 and 6 present the results for showing up with non-study companions to the interviews. Odd-numbered columns present results with only strata-fixed effects, and even-numbered columns also control for neighborhood and women's characteristics.

The Travel Buddy treatment led to a large increase in women's attendance at interviews compared to the control group (columns 1 and 2). 15.4% of women in the control group showed up at the factory sites to participate in the interviews, closely mirroring their engagement in job search at baseline[23]. The Travel Buddy treatment increased the interview show-up rate for women by 11.8 percentage points relative to the control group (p-value = 0.034). This represents a remarkable 76% increase over the control mean. Controlling for the neighborhood and women's baseline characteristics improves the precision of our estimates, and the magnitude of effect increases to 12.4 percentage points, an 80% increase over the control mean (p-value = 0.029). These effects are remarkable. An information intervention designed to improve women's ability to commute together, had such big effects on women's probability of participating in interviews. These point estimates are similar to those in McKelway, 2021, which show an 11 percentage points increase in job sign-up by women in India in response to an information intervention providing women's family information about the job followed by a promotional video. Furthermore, the effects also parallel results of Grosset and Donald, 2024, which show a 15 percentage points

[23]At baseline, 16% of women from the control group reported making at least one trip to an employer in search of jobs in the past two weeks.

increase in job seekers' likelihood to accept job offers at a factory if individuals from their social networks are also offered jobs during the same shift.

The Travel Buddy treatment can improve women's participation rates in interviews not just by helping women commute together but also by reducing familial pushback and community disapproval[24], and increasing the amenity value of jobs at the partner factories by having friends and neighbors possibly working together in the future.[25] We isolate the effects of commuting together from these other mechanisms by examining the differences in the interview show-up rates between Travel Buddy and Peer Effect treatments.

Compared to the average interview participation rate of the Peer Effect group (14%), the treatment effects are still very large. The Travel Buddy treatment increased women's interview participation by 12.7-13.5 percentage points (p-value = 0.015). This is equivalent to a 90%-96% increase over the Peer Effect group mean. Interestingly, women from the Peer Effect treatment actually show up less than the control group however, the differences are not statistically significant. With these estimates, we can attribute the differences in interview show-up rates between Travel Buddy and Control group to enabling women to commute together. Additionally, these results also suggest that group meetings did not have a sufficient impact on changing norms regarding women's work or improving job amenity value to induce strong positive effects on women's show-up rates at interviews.

We next examine the effects of women traveling with companions to the partner factories. At baseline, most women reported traveling outside their neighborhoods accompanied by adults. Therefore, we expected that women in all three groups would commute to the factory with companions. Consistent with our expectations, 77% of all women who attended the interviews were accompanied by an adult. This finding suggests that women themselves prefer to travel with companions, independent of the Travel Buddy treatment. This is telling especially since there was no mention of commuting together or with companions in the control or Peer Effect groups.

Furthermore, 83% of the interviewees from the control group traveled to the factory with others, and 63% of them traveled with fellow study participants. These results suggest that even without explicitly providing women with information about other study participants or mentioning the idea of commuting together, some of the women were able to connect with others from their neighborhoods and organize themselves to travel together to the factories. Taken together with the higher interview attendance in the Travel Buddy group, it strongly suggests that women face challenges in coordinating group travel on their

[24] Afridi et al., 2023 find that providing access to an online job search platform to women and their peers improves women's labor market outcomes in Delhi, India Anukriti et al., 2022 find that providing women and their peers with vouchers for Family Planning (FP) services helped improve women's use of FP services and also reduced women's fear of stigma related to use of FP by 43%.

[25] Grosset and Donald, 2024 shows the presence of complementarities in labor supply. They found that job seekers are more likely to accept job offers if people in their network are offered the same location and shift. They also provide suggestive evidence that the effects were mainly driven by the possibility of commuting together to work.

own and, therefore, can benefit from external intervention.

Columns 3-4 show that the Travel Buddy and Peer Effect treatments worked as intended. 9.6% of women from the control group traveled with study participants to the factories for interviews. Travel Buddy intervention increased this probability by 9.5-9.8 percentage points or by approximately 100%. We also observe large and statistically significant differences between Travel Buddy and Peer Effect groups. Women in the Travel Buddy group were 13.4-13.6 percentage points more likely than women in the Peer Effect group to travel to the factory with other study participants. Interestingly, women in the Peer Effect group were less likely to commute with fellow study participants than those in the control group.

In columns 5-6 we look at the probability of women commuting to the factories with non-study participants. We find 4.3-4.8 percentage points difference between Travel Buddy and control groups, however, the differences are not statistically significant. Conditional on participating in job interviews, the percentage of women traveling with non-study participants in these groups is very similar. Thereby suggesting that majority of this difference is driven by Travel Buddy women showing up more for interviews. Next, as expected, we find that women in the Peer Effect group were significantly more likely to travel with non-study adults than the other two groups, reaffirming our earlier findings that women have a strong preference for traveling with companions. It also shows that if women can travel with other women they are more likely to do so with them instead of family members.

A potential threat to the validity of results discussed in this section is that the low interview attendance rates in the Peer Effect treatment are not because of discouraging women from commuting together. Instead, it's due to women who attended interviews earlier dissuading others from participating by sharing negative information about the interviews or the job. To address this concern, in Table A6, we include fixed effects for the number of days between the group meeting and the first day of assigned interview window. We also include interview date fixed effects. The treatment effects remain robust to this inclusion. The results are also robust to randomization inference (Table A8), thereby alleviating any concerns regarding the small sample size and neighborhood level randomization.

To summarize, we show that the Travel Buddy treatment significantly increased women's attendance at interviews compared to the control group. We also show that this effect is primarily driven by enabling women to commute together, rather than simply organizing them into groups to work at the same employer, as shown by higher interview participation rates of the Travel Buddy group versus the Peer Effect group. We also show that women in all three groups traveled with companions to the factories, but those in the Travel Buddy group were more likely to travel with other participants from the study.

5.2 Effects on Job Search at Endline

In this section, we explore the impact of the Travel Buddy treatment on women's likelihood of seeking jobs beyond the interview experiment. Both the Travel Buddy and Peer Effect treatments showed a modest increase in the likelihood of women accepting job offers at the partner factories. Although many women did not secure jobs due to the low passing rate in the factory trials (later detailed in subsection 5.3), the treatments had a positive ripple effect on women's job search efforts at other employers. We anticipated that once women were connected with other women from their neighborhood who were also seeking jobs, they would continue to travel together and seek jobs with other employers. Our findings in Table 4 confirm this.

In Table 4, we estimate the effect of the interventions on three outcome variables. The data for these outcomes comes from endline surveys conducted six weeks after the intervention. In Columns 1 and 2, we estimate the effects on the likelihood of making a job search trip, which is an indicator of visiting any factories or employers in search of jobs in the last 45 days post-factory interviews. In Columns 3 and 4, we include effects on the number of such trips made in the last 45 days. In columns 5 and 6, we look at the probability of women making such trips accompanied by other women from the neighborhood.[26]

16% of women from the control group made a job search trip in the last 45 days. In columns 1 and 2, we show that the Travel Buddy treatment led to a 12-12.3 percentage points increase (p-value = 0.012) increase in women's likelihood of making a job search trip. This represents a 75% increase over the control group mean. On the intensive margin (columns 3 and 4), women in Travel Buddy treatment made an additional 0.36 trips on average (p-value = 0.02). This is equivalent to making twice as many trips as women in the control group. These findings highlight that by facilitating group travel, the Travel Buddy intervention not only improved access to job interviews but also their ongoing job-seeking efforts.

The Peer Effect treatment was designed to discourage women in the same meeting group from commuting together to interviews at the partner factory locations by assigning them to different interview dates. However, in the absence of such a design, the Peer Effect treatment would still help women connect with other women from the neighborhood who are also interested in working. Therefore, it could have a positive effect on women's job search outside of participating in factory interviews. We find results along this reasoning. Relative to the control group, the Peer Effect treatment led to a positive albeit smaller impact on the job search on extensive and intensive margins. Although these effects are not statistically significant at conventional levels.

Based on these results, we conjecture that while women in both Travel Buddy and Peer

[26] The questions specifically asked women not to include the trip made to the partner factories as part of the interview experiment.

Effect groups were introduced to other women from their neighborhoods, traveling together to the factories created a ripple effect on women's future travel, with women continuing to rely on each other for other trips. Results in columns 5 and 6 reaffirm this. Women in the Travel Buddy group were 10 percentage points more likely than women in the control group to have made these job search trips accompanied by women in the neighborhood. This represents an approximately 150% increase over the control mean of 7.4%. Women from the Peer Effect, on the other hand, were only 2.7 percentage points likely to have traveled with women from their neighborhood.

5.3 Effects on Employment at Partner Factories

In Table 5, Column 1, we estimate the impact on women's likelihood of passing the job trial at the partner factories, based on data provided directly by the factory administration. Despite screening for requisite skills, the proportion of women passing these trials remains low, with only 3% of women in the control group successfully passed them. The results indicate that women in the Travel Buddy group were 2.2 percentage points more likely, and those in the Peer Effect group were 3.6 percentage points more likely, to pass the trials compared to the control group. However, none of the differences across the three groups are statistically significant.

In Column 2, we estimate the effect on women's likelihood of accepting a job offer at the partner factories. Within the control group, only 1% of women accepted the job offer and commenced employment. Women in the Travel Buddy group were 2.3 percentage points more likely, and those in the Peer Effect group were 3 percentage points more likely, to accept the offer. Again, the treatment effects are not statistically significant. While these findings suggest some positive trends, the low overall rates of trial success and job acceptance present challenges to drawing conclusions from these results.

5.4 Mechanisms

In this section, we explore mechanisms that could help explain the significant effects of the Travel Buddy treatment on women's attendance at factory interviews. We begin by providing evidence that the effects are primarily driven by introducing women to other women living nearby. We also estimate heterogeneous treatment by baseline measures of women's perceptions of safety while commuting. Next, we evaluate whether the treatment effects are driven by allowing women to reduce travel costs to the factory using a pilot experiment preceding the main experiment.

5.4.1 Connecting with Women Living Nearby

This mechanism suggests that Travel Buddy treatment improves women's interview participation and job search by connecting them to other women living nearby (we refer to them as peers) who are also interested in working. Specifically, we define peers as women

living in the same housing structure and in adjacent and opposite houses to women in our study sample. We present two pieces of evidence in support of this mechanism. First, we show that the Travel Buddy treatment increased women's peers and their likelihood of traveling with them outside their homes at endline. Next, we present results from heterogeneity analysis and show that the Travel Buddy treatment effects are significantly larger for women with less number of peers.

In Table 6 we show results for three outcomes measured during the endline surveys. In column 1, we look at the effect on the number of peers as reported by study participants 6 weeks post intervention. On average, women in the control group knew four women (similar to the baseline average of 4.2). The Travel Buddy treatment increased this number by one, implying that women in the Travel Buddy group reported knowing an additional woman living nearby. We also find that the Peer Effect treatment increased women's peers within their neighborhood by 0.5, albeit small and statistically insignificant relative to the control group. The difference between Travel Buddy and Peer Effect groups is also not statistically significant. The Travel Buddy treatment effect is similar to that in Anukriti et al., 2022, which provided family planning vouchers to women and their peers. The treatment increased women's close peers in the village by a similar magnitude.

Results in column 2 shows that while women in both Travel Buddy and Peer Effect groups reported knowing more women at endline, only the women in the Travel Buddy group were significantly more likely (7.6-8.1 percentage points) to have traveled outside their homes with their peers in the last 7 days (column 2). Notably, in column 3, we find that women in the Travel Buddy and Peer Effect groups discuss household issues with women living nearby almost equally but 10-11 percentage points more significantly than women in the control group. This result reassures us that the two kinds of group meetings, Travel Buddy and Peer Effect, did not differ from each other because otherwise we would have seen different effects of the two groups on women's social connections. Furthermore, results in column 2 and 3 taken together provides suggestive evidence that the effects on the interview participation and job search activities are more likely to be driven by enabling women to commute together rather than by other mechanisms such as strengthening women's peer networks, as found by Afridi et al., 2023.

Next, results from heterogeneity analysis in Table 7 (Columns 1) show that the Travel Buddy treatment effects are significantly larger for women with less number of peers. In contrast, we not find such heterogeneity in Peer Effect treatment effects. Women in Travel Buddy treatment with less than the median number of peers were 20 percentage points ($\beta_1 + \beta_3$, p-value = 0.002) or 180% more likely than women with less than median peers in the control group to show up for the interviews. A similar magnitude of difference exists in interview participation rates when comparing women with fewer peers in Travel Buddy and Peer Effect groups: approximately 10 percentage points (p-value = 0.012).

Furthermore, women with less than the median number of peers within the neigh-

borhood were 10-11 percentage points (p-value = 0.03) less likely to show up to the interviews. However, we find that the Travel Buddy treatment helps mitigate this gradient while the Peer Effect treatment further exacerbates the negative coefficient. For Travel Buddy, women with less than the median number of peers at baseline were 5 percentage points ($\beta_3 + \beta_5$, p-value = 0.45) more likely than women with more than the median number of peers to appear for interviews. Whereas for Peer Effect, women with less than the median number of peers were 15 percentage points ($\beta_4 + \beta_5$, p-value = 0.23) less likely than women with more peers to participate in interviews. This further provides evidence that the Travel Buddy treatment helped narrow the gap between women with low vs. more peers. These results suggest that the Travel Buddy treatment performed significantly better by improving the likelihood of women with fewer peers showing up for interviews.

The combination of results presented so far in this section suggests that the treatment works because it connects women with low social connections to other women who are also interested in working and that women continued traveling together together even beyond the job search actvities.

Related to this, In Column 2, Table 7, we also evaluate the heterogeneity in treatment effects based on women's baseline measures of safety perception across different modes of transport. This measure is the average of responses to the question: *How safe do you feel while traveling by the following means (auto, walk, bus) during the daytime?* A higher score implies a higher feeling of safety. *Covariate* = 1 if the average of the three responses is less than the median. The effects of the Travel Buddy treatment are concentrated among women with below-median safety perceptions, i.e., those who reported feeling unsafe while commuting. For women with low safety perceptions, the treatment increased interview show-up rates by 20 percentage points (p= 0.08) compared to women with above-median safety perceptions within the Travel Buddy group.

The difference between the Travel Buddy group and both the Peer Effect and control groups becomes significantly larger when focusing on women with poor safety perceptions during commuting. Specifically, the Travel Buddy treatment increased the probability of participating in factory interviews by more than 300% relative to the control group for women with below-median safety perceptions. This corresponds to a 36 percentage point increase over a base rate of 11.4% ($\beta_1 + \beta_3$, p = 0.002). In comparison to women in the Peer Effect treatment group who also had below-median safety perceptions, women in the Travel Buddy group were 30 percentage points more likely to attend the interviews. However, we do not interpret this result as causal because women's perception of safety while commuting is going to be correlated with women's mobility and other factors affecting treatment effects. Nonetheless, it suggests that Travel Buddy treatment was differentially effective in improving show-up rates at interviews for women with reported lower feelings of safety.

5.4.2 Reducing Travel Costs

This mechanism suggests that the Travel Buddy treatment could have a significant effect by reducing travel expenses for women to the factory. For instance, women can split travel costs by booking a private vehicle or using a cheaper mode such as a shared auto rickshaw together or carpooling with women or their family members who own personal vehicles. To test this mechanism, we estimate the differences in treatment effects between the Travel Buddy treatment and a treatment that covers women's round trip costs to the factories on the day of the interviews. If the effects are primarily driven by reducing women's travel costs to the factory, we would find similar magnitude of effects across the two interventions. We rely on results from our pilot experiment - a neighborhood-level RCT that was conducted in Selaqui, India, during the summer of 2022. The pilot experiment precedes the main experiment discussed so far in this paper.

During the pilot experiment, we partnered with another apparel manufacturing firm, which has two units, both located in Selaqui[27]. Similar to the main experiment, the hiring for the partner factory firm also takes place through walk-in interviews held at the factory gate. We stratified 15 neighborhoods by residential areas and randomly assigned them to one of the three groups - Travel Buddy, Travel Subsidy, and Control. Following the same screening criteria, we enrolled 139 women from the neighborhoods to the pilot experiment. The design for the Travel Buddy and control groups was similar to the main experiment[28]. In the Travel Subsidy treatment, women were invited to participate in the walk-in interviews via individual one-to-one meetings, same as the control group. Additionally, women were provided with a travel subsidy to cover the round-trip costs of traveling to the partner factories. They were provided with a one-time subsidy of INR 50 (or $0.625), which could be redeemed at the factory gate on the days of the interviews.[29]

Table 8 presents the results from the pilot experiment. The findings are very similar to our results from the main experiment. 80% of all women who showed up did not travel to the factory alone. 27% of women from the Travel Buddy group participated in the walk-in interviews, almost three times the control group. The Travel Buddy treatment led to 13-16 percentage point increase in women's interview participation over the control mean of 10%.

We now turn our attention to the comparison between the Travel Buddy and Travel Subsidy groups to shed light on the travel cost mechanism. The Travel Subsidy treatment increased the participation in interviews by 7-9 percentage points relative to the control groups. The size of the effect is almost half of that of Travel Buddy treatment but the two

[27] The units are approximately 500 meters apart.

[28] There were three differences between the Travel Buddy treatment design in the main and pilot experiment. During the pilot: 1) women were not added to group meeting's WhatsApp groups; 2) we did not share details on how to reach the factory; 3) there was no time provided for women to socialize with one another.

[29] On average, the one-side travel cost from study areas to the factory was INR 20. Therefore, the subsidy equaled an amount slightly (1 US cent) more than the round trip cost.

effects are not statistically significant. While this evidence is only suggestive due to the small sample size of the pilot experiment and noisy point estimates, nonetheless, the results shows that providing women with travel subsidies to cover the cost of travel to the factory does improve their show-up rates but not as much as inviting women together in groups without any subsidies. This suggests that while some of the effects of the Travel Buddy treatment might be driven by reducing women's travel costs, it cannot explain the entirety of the effects.

6 Conclusion

Restrictive social norms and safety concerns can severely limit women's ability to travel freely and impose additional restrictions on their mobility, especially in developing countries. This lack of freedom of movement can have significant consequences for women's lives. In this paper, we demonstrate that women might be able to overcome these restrictions by traveling together in groups and significantly improve their likelihood of attending job interviews and seeking jobs in India.

Our findings reveal that an intervention enabling women to travel together to job interviews at an apparel factory significantly increases their probability of attending. Women invited in groups to interviews held on the same day and at the same location are 80% more likely to participate in the interviews compared to women invited individually for interviews on the same day. Importantly, we show experimentally that these effects are not driven by organizing women into groups or by improving job amenity value but rather improving women's ability to commute together. Inviting women to participate in interviews via group meetings and scheduling interviews on the same days increased probability of attending by 90% compared to scheduling interviews on different days.

We show that women have a preference to travel with companions demonstrated by majority of women (77%) traveling to the interviews with said companions. We also find that the large effects of the Travel Buddy intervention are driven by connecting women with other women living nearby who are also interested in working. It significantly expanded women's peer networks near their houses and the effect was was more pronounced for women with low baseline number of peers. The combination of these results is important. It demonstrates that the while women prefer to travel in groups, they are are constrained in their ability to do so due to limited peer networks. A separate small-scale pilot experiment suggests that a reason women may prefer to travel accompanied by adults is because it helps them reduce travel costs. Having said that, it does not fully account for such preference or explain the entirety of the observed treatment effects.

Furthermore, the Travel Buddy intervention resulted in a 75% increase in the probability of women engaging in job search six weeks after the intervention. It doubled the number of trips to employers in search of jobs by women in the Travel Buddy group rela-

tive to women in the control group. Additionally, women continued to rely on each other to travel when visiting employers or for other purposes six weeks post intervention.

Despite significant improvements in interview participation, job search activity, and peer networks, the intervention did not substantially affect women's employment at the partner factories. Low trial-passing rates at the factory and the lack of suitable job opportunities can likely explain this outcome. These results open new avenues for future research by suggesting that while mobility interventions improve job search behaviors, additional barriers to employment especially demand side factors must also be addressed.

The findings from this study contribute to a deeper understanding of why women may not actively seek job opportunities, particularly in countries and contexts where mobility constraints persist. This paper introduces a practical and cost-effective intervention to help overcome these barriers, facilitating women's access to job markets. One important implication of these results is that they can inform hiring policies for firms, especially in sectors where in-person interviews are required, such as garment manufacturing. In industries where on-the-job trials are part of the hiring process and cannot easily be replaced by online alternatives, our results demonstrate that inviting women in groups rather than individually can increase the number of women attending interviews and as demonstrated by Grosset and Donald, 2024, improve overall job acceptance rates.

A second, broader implication of our findings os that women can positively influence the lives of other women in various ways, such as by enhancing their mobility, improving employment outcomes and help make transportation more accessible. It can help reduce women's dependency on family members, particularly male relatives, when traveling and encourage them to seek out other women from their neighborhoods as travel companions, thereby strengthening social connections. These findings align with recent research, which indicates that engaging women's peer networks can help improve women's take-up of entrepreneurial training (Field et al., 2016), family planning (Anukriti et al., 2022) and improve children's welfare (Kandpal and Baylis, 2019).

Finally, there is a growing consensus among policymakers and researchers that transport is not gender-neutral. Our results underscore the need to identify and study different strategies employed by women to navigate safety concerns and restrictive social norms related to mobility, as well as the costs and benefits these behaviors to make transport systems more inclusive and equitable. For instance, as we show in this paper, if woman have a preference to travel with other women but are constrained in their ability to do, bundling policies like providing free public transport (as done by an Indian state) with an intervention like ours can have a significant impact on women's mobility. This necessitates building a solid understanding of the causes and implications of mobility constraints faced by women in developing countries.

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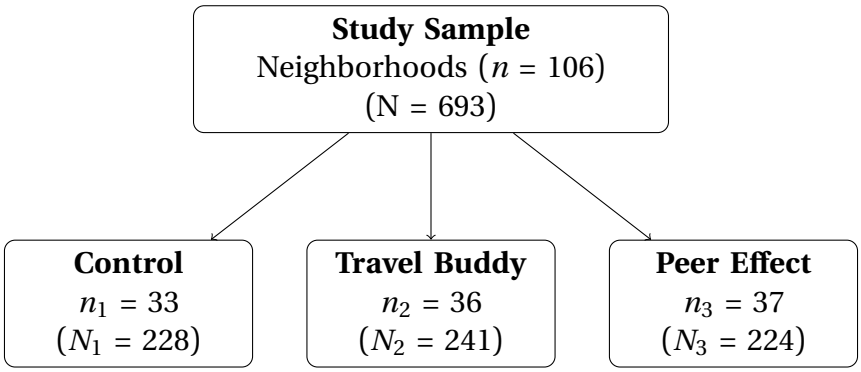
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7 Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Experimental Design



	Interview Invite	Group Meeting	Same Interview Dates
Travel Buddy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peer Effect	Yes	Yes	No - Different to all
Control	Yes	No	Yes

Table 1: Neighborhood Characteristics and Balance

Variable	(1) Control Mean/(SD)	(2) Travel Buddy Mean/(SD)	(3) Peer Effect Mean/(SD)	(1)-(2) Pairwise t-test P-value	(1)-(3) Pairwise t-test P-value	(2)-(3) Pairwise t-test P-value
Number of women enrolled to the study	6.91	6.69	6.05	0.78	0.17	0.41
	(0.45)	(0.64)	(0.43)			
Approximate number of households	200.61	201.67	198.92	0.90	0.83	0.79
	(4.13)	(7.72)	(6.85)			
= 1 if metro station near by	0.45	0.36	0.38	0.44	0.53	0.88
	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.08)			
= 1 if bus stand within cluster boundary	0.03	0.00	0.03	0.32	0.94	0.32
	(0.03)	(0.00)	(0.03)			
One-way trip to closest partner factory:						
Cost of private auto (USD) to factory	1.30	1.43	1.93	0.36	0.19	0.30
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.47)			
Cost of shared auto (USD) to factory	0.37	0.29	0.29	0.24	0.23	0.97
	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.02)			
Distance to factory (Kms)	4.50	4.60	5.37	0.88	0.23	0.27
	(0.48)	(0.45)	(0.53)			
Minutes to factory	15.94	16.86	16.51	0.49	0.67	0.80
	(0.93)	(0.94)	(0.96)			
Number of neighborhoods	33	36	37	69	70	73

Notes: This table presents the average values for neighborhood characteristics and tests for balance across the three groups - control, Travel Buddy, and Peer Effect. A unit of observation is a neighborhood. The last 3 columns show the p-values from the pairwise t-tests checking for equality of two means. Standard errors are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 2: Group Meeting Attendance

	Attended meeting		Attended alone		Total women present	
	(1)	(2)	(4)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Travel Buddy	0.021	0.034	0.015	0.009	0.412	0.444
	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.361)	(0.312)
Strata FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Peer Effect Mean	0.93	0.93	0.02	0.02	3.87	3.87
Neighborhoods	73	73	73	73	73	73
Observations	465	465	465	465	465	465

Notes: This table is restricted to include observations in Travel Buddy and Peer Effects treatments only. The outcomes variables in columns 1-6 include indicator for women attending meetings, indicator for attending a meeting alone, and the total number of women that attended a meeting. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 3: Effects on Probability of Attending Interviews

			=1 If showed up with			
	Interview show up		Study women		Non-study adult	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Travel Buddy (β_1)	0.118**	0.125**	0.087*	0.092*	0.043	0.051
	(0.055)	(0.056)	(0.049)	(0.052)	(0.030)	(0.032)
Peer Effect (β_2)	-0.017	-0.005	-0.042	-0.038	0.044	0.057*
	(0.044)	(0.046)	(0.040)	(0.043)	(0.028)	(0.029)
p-value: $\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.015	0.014	0.009	0.006	0.975	0.851
Controls	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Control Mean	0.154	0.154	0.096	0.096	0.035	0.035
Clusters	106	106	106	106	106	106
Observations	693	693	693	693	693	693

Notes: This table presents intent-to-treat (ITT) treatment effects on women's probability of attending interviews at the partner factories (columns 1 and 2) and whether the women traveled to the factories with study women or non-study companions (Columns 3-6). Each column represents a separate regression. All regressions include strata fixed effects. Controls include baseline values of variables in Table 1 and Table A2. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 4: Effects on Job Search at Endline

	= 1 if made job search trips		Number of job search trips		= 1 if made job search trips with women from neighborhood	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Travel Buddy (β_1)	0.120***	0.123***	0.349**	0.361**	0.106***	0.109***
	(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.143)	(0.152)	(0.031)	(0.032)
Peer Effect (β_2)	0.031	0.036	0.252	0.259	0.025	0.027
	(0.045)	(0.048)	(0.188)	(0.217)	(0.030)	(0.031)
p-value: $\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.024	0.019	0.591	0.593	0.007	0.005
Controls	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Control Mean	0.160	0.160	0.330	0.330	0.061	0.074
Neighborhoods	104	104	104	104	104	104
Observations	560	560	560	560	560	560

Notes: This table presents intent-to-treat (ITT) treatment effects on women's job search trips outside the interview experiment as reported by women during Endline Surveys. The number of observations is less than the study sample since it only includes observations for women that we were able to follow up for the endline surveys. The recall period for the three outcomes is 6 weeks post completion of interviews at the partner factories. In Columns (1)-(2), we measure the effects on the likelihood of making a job search trip in the last 45 days. This includes visits to employers in search of jobs. In Columns (3)-(4), we measure the effects on the number of visits made to the employers. In Columns (5)-(6), we measure the effects on the probability of making such a visit accompanied by other women from the neighborhood. It is an indicator variable that takes value 1 if women made any such trip accompanied by women from the neighborhood. All regressions include strata fixed effects. Controls include baseline values of variables in Table A2. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 5: Effects on Employment at Partner Factory

	Passed Trial	Accepted Offer
	(1)	(2)
Travel Buddy (β_1)	0.022	0.023
	(0.032)	(0.026)
Peer Effect (β_2)	0.036	0.030
	(0.027)	(0.021)
p-value: $\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.507	0.670
Control Mean	0.03	0.01
Neighborhoods	106	106
Observations	693	693

Notes: This table presents intent-to-treat (ITT) treatment effects on the interview passing rates and job take-up at the factory. The data for this table comes from factory administration. Each column is a separate regression. Controls include baseline values of variables in Table 1 and Table A2. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood cluster level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 6: Effects on Connections with Women Living Nearby

	Number of women known living nearby	=1 if traveled outside with these women	=1 if discussed household issues with these women
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Travel Buddy (β_1)	1.103***	0.081*	0.115**
	(0.399)	(0.042)	(0.054)
Peer Effect (β_2)	0.531	0.005	0.106
	(0.502)	(0.044)	(0.073)
p-value: $\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.19	0.03	0.86
Control Mean	4.16	0.17	1.68
Neighborhoods	104	104	104
Observations	560	560	560

Notes: This table presents intent-to-treat (ITT) treatment effects on women's connections with other women as reported by them during Endline Surveys. The number of observations is less than the study sample since it only includes observations for women that we were able to follow up for the endline surveys. Each column is a separate regression. In column 1, the outcome variable is the number of women study participants knew living nearby. We define living nearby as living in the same housing structure and in adjacent and opposite houses to women in our study sample. In column 2, the outcome variable is an indicator for whether the women traveled with these women (those living nearby) in the last 7 days. In column 3, the outcome variable is an indicator for whether women discussed household issues such as money problems, children's education, with such women in the last 7 days. All regressions include strata fixed effects and controls in Table A2. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood cluster level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 7: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Interview Participation, by Number of Peers and Feeling of Safety

	Covariate = 1 if Less than Median	
	Number of Peers	Feeling of Safety
	(1)	(2)
Travel Buddy (β_1)	0.057	0.092
	(0.072)	(0.059)
Travel Buddy × Covariate (β_3)	0.136*	0.273**
	(0.076)	(0.128)
Peer Effect (β_2)	-0.017	-0.011
	(0.058)	(0.048)
Peer Effect × Covariate (β_4)	0.029	0.068
	(0.062)	(0.104)
Covariate (β_5)	-0.090**	-0.065
	(0.044)	(0.084)
p-value:		
$\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.274	0.075
$\beta_1 + \beta_3 = 0$	0.002	0.002
$\beta_1 + \beta_3 - \beta_2 - \beta_4 = 0$	0.004	0.011
Control Mean	0.154	0.154
Control Mean if Covariate = 1	0.113	0.114
Neighborhoods	106	106
Observations	693	693

Notes: This table presents ITT treatment effects on the interview participation at factories by women's baseline levels of number of peers in the neighborhoods and feeling of safety while traveling. *Number of peers* is the total number of women study participants knew living nearby. We define living nearby as living in the same housing structure and in adjacent and opposite houses to women in our study sample. For column 1, *Covariate* = 1 if the number of peers is less than the median. Women's feeling of safety is the average of responses to the question: *How safe do you feel while traveling by the following means (auto, walk, bus) during the daytime?* A higher score implies a higher feeling of safety. *Covariate* = 1 if the average of the three responses is less than the median. Each column is a separate regression. All regressions include strata fixed effects and controls. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table 8: Results from Pilot Experiment

			=1 If showed up			
	Interview show up		With any adult		With study women	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Travel Buddy (β_1)	0.13*	0.16**	0.13*	0.14*	0.11	0.13*
	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Travel Subsidy (β_2)	0.09	0.07	0.06	0.05	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.06)
p-value: $\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.636	0.402	0.400	0.326	0.102	0.063
Controls	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Control Mean	0.098	0.098	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078
Neighborhoods	15	15	15	15	15	15
Observations	139	139	139	139	139	139

Notes: This table presents intent-to-treat (ITT) treatment effects on women's probability of attending interviews (columns 1 and 2) and whether the women traveled to the factories with study women or non-study companions (Columns 3-6) during the pilot experiment. Each column represents a separate regression. All regressions include area fixed effects. Controls include women's baseline characteristics Table A2. Standard errors are calculated using the bootstrapping procedure and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Appendix A: Supplementary Tables and Figures

Table A1: Study Timeline

Summer 2022	Pilot study in Selaqui, India	
September 2023	Finalizing study areas in Faridabad and Noida	
November 2023	Creating boundaries for neighborhoods	
January 2024	Randomization	
March 2024	Start of baseline surveys and intervention meetings	Rolling interview dates, collection of midline data and interview participation data
June 2024	Start of Endline Surveys	
August 2024	End of Fieldwork	

Notes: This table presents timeline for the experiment and data collection. Baseline surveys and intervention meetings were held on a rolling basis from March 2024 to June 2024. During this time, we assigned women with 2-day windows beginning one-day after the intervention meetings were completed. Once the interview window passed, we conducted midline phone surveys with women. The endline surveys began by end of May 2024 and was conducted 6 weeks post completion of the interview window.

Table A2: Baseline Characteristics of Women and Balance

Variable	(1) Control Mean/(SD)	(2) Travel Buddy Mean/(SD)	(3) Peer Effect Mean/(SD)	(1)-(2) Pairwise t-test P-value	(1)-(3) Pairwise t-test P-value	(2)-(3) Pairwise t-test P-value
Age	28.79	28.53	29.04	0.65	0.65	0.38
	(0.39)	(0.42)	(0.39)			
Married	0.79	0.79	0.82	0.98	0.71	0.65
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.04)			
Household size	3.31	3.53	3.68	0.44	0.21	0.52
	(0.24)	(0.16)	(0.18)			
Literate	0.84	0.87	0.79	0.62	0.44	0.11
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.04)			
Monthly household income (USD)	202.57	202.86	206.26	0.99	0.83	0.81
	(13.44)	(9.34)	(10.24)			
Owns phone	0.68	0.77	0.71	0.09*	0.49	0.22
	(0.05)	(0.03)	(0.03)			
Rented house	0.74	0.70	0.66	0.66	0.35	0.57
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)			
Worked in last 6 months	0.10	0.12	0.16	0.55	0.12	0.32
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)			
= 1 if didn't leave the house	0.14	0.16	0.21	0.55	0.08*	0.21
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)			
Number of trips within immediate vicinity	5.89	5.68	5.64	0.79	0.72	0.96
	(0.54)	(0.57)	(0.44)			
= 1 if didn't leave neighborhood	0.24	0.28	0.32	0.25	0.07*	0.37
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)			
Number of trips outside of neighborhoods	1.26	1.44	1.13	0.41	0.53	0.13
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.14)			
Number of observations	228	241	224	469	452	465
Number of neighborhoods	33	36	37	69	70	73

Notes: This table presents the average values for women's baseline characteristics tests for balance across the three groups - control, Peer effect, and Travel buddy. The last 3 columns show the p-values from the pairwise t-tests checking for equality of two means. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

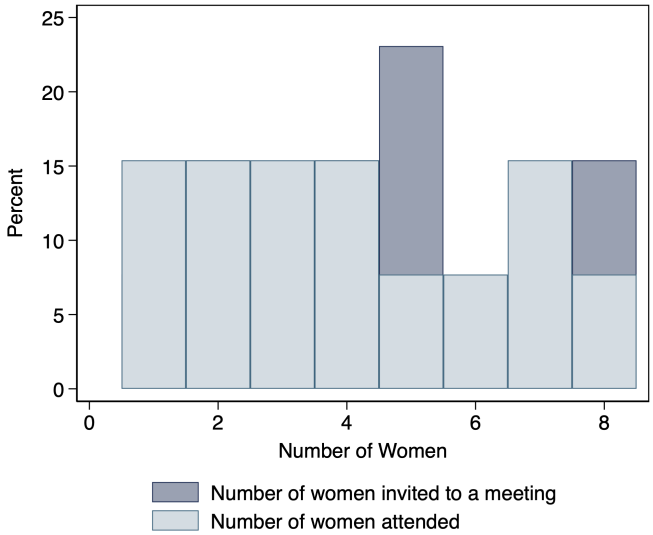
Table A3: Study Participation and Treatment Status

	= 1 if refused to participate	
	(1)	(2)
Travel Buddy	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.022)	(0.022)
Peer Effect	0.000	-0.011
	(0.020)	(0.014)
Strata FE	N	Y
Control Mean	0.02	0.02
Neighborhoods	107	107
Observations	708	708

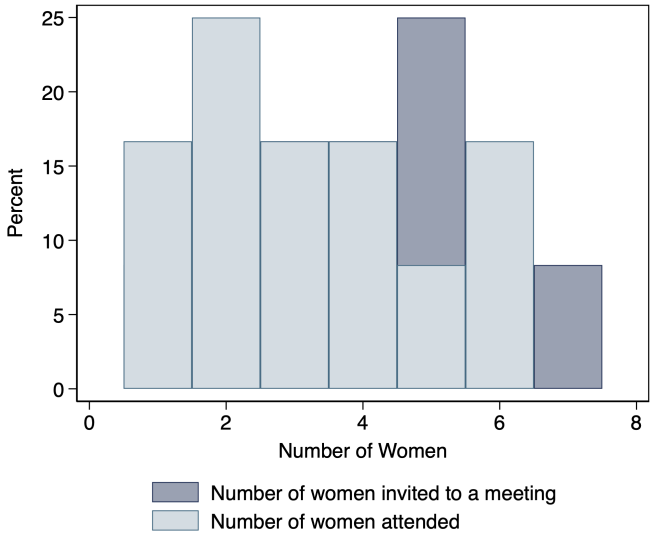
Notes: This table presents the levels of consent acceptance to participate in the study and baseline surveys. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Figure A1: Distribution of Meeting Attendance

(a) Travel Buddy Group



(b) Peer Effect Group



Notes: This figure plots the distribution of the number of women invited to a group meeting versus the number of women who attended it. Panel (a) presents the distribution for Travel Buddy neighborhoods, and panel (b) presents the distribution for Peer Effect neighborhoods. The cases where only one woman was invited to a meeting are the instances where a woman couldn't attend the meeting she was initially assigned to.

Table A4: Detailed Information on Group Meetings

	Travel Buddy (1)	Peer Effect (2)
	Mean(SD)	Mean(SD)
=1 if attended meeting	0.95	0.93
	(0.21)	(0.25)
=1 if attended alone	0.04	0.02
	(0.19)	(0.15)
=1 if attended with 1 other woman	0.11	0.13
	(0.31)	(0.34)
Total women present in the meeting	4.28	3.87
	(1.97)	(1.73)
=1 if joined meetings' WhatsApp group	0.44	0.57
	(0.50)	(0.50)
% of women previously known prior to the meeting	33.62	32.20
	(33.94)	(32.93)
Observations	230	209
Neighborhoods	36	37

Notes: This table presents the details on the group meetings for both treatment groups. On average, 6.3 women were enrolled per neighborhod. A total of 122 intervention meetings were conducted in 73 study clusters. To measure if women knew other women in the group meeting prior to joining the study, we asked women to identify known women present before the group meeting began.

Table A5: Attrition From Midline and Endline Surveys

	Midline	Endline
	(1)	(2)
Travel Buddy	-0.033	0.025
	(0.031)	(0.038)
Peer Effect	0.044	0.008
	(0.044)	(0.045)
p-value: $\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.061	0.673
Control Mean	0.184	0.175
Neighborhoods	106	106
Observations	693	693

*Notes:*This table presents attrition levels of midline and endline surveys and tests for balance across the three groups. All regressions include strata-fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood cluster level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table A6: Effects on Interview Show-Up including Interview Date FE

			=1 If showed up			
	Interview show up		With study women		With non-study adult	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Travel Buddy (β_1)	0.134**	0.144**	0.099*	0.098**	0.057*	0.077**
	(0.057)	(0.065)	(0.054)	(0.046)	(0.033)	(0.032)
Peer Effect (β_2)	-0.028	-0.044	-0.056	-0.081*	0.043	0.067*
	(0.049)	(0.055)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.029)	(0.034)
p-value: $\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.006	0.001	0.003	0.000	0.697	0.776
Interview Gap	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Interview Date FE	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Control Mean	0.154	0.154	0.096	0.096	0.035	0.035
Clusters	106	106	106	106	106	106
Observations	693	693	693	693	693	693

Notes: This table presents intent-to-treat (ITT) treatment effects on the show-up for walk-in interviews at the factory gate. Columns (1) - (2) display the impact of the treatment for the Travel Buddy Group and Peer Effect group on women's show up at the factory site for walk-in interviews. Columns (3) - (6) present the treatment effects on the show-up for walk-in interviews with study women and other adults who were not part of the study at the factory gate. All regressions include controls in Table 1 and Table A2. *Interview Gap* controls for the number of days between providing women with interview invitation letters and the start of the interview window. *Interview Date Fixed Effects* control for the 2-day interview window assigned to women. Standard errors are clustered at the neighborhood cluster level and are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Table A7: Effects on Probability of Participating in Interviews - Randomization Inference

			=1 if traveled to the interviews with			
	= 1 if participated in interviews		Study women		Non-study companion	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Travel Buddy (β_1)	0.118*	0.125*	0.087*	0.092*	0.043	0.051
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.20)	(0.14)
Peer Effect (β_2)	-0.017	-0.005	-0.042	-0.038	0.044	0.057*
	(0.66)	(0.93)	(0.31)	(0.38)	(0.15)	(0.07)
p-value: $\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.47	0.55
Controls	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Control Mean	0.154	0.154	0.096	0.096	0.035	0.035
Neighborhoods	106	106	106	106	106	106
Observations	693	693	693	693	693	693

Notes: This table presents intent-to-treat (ITT) treatment effects on women's probability of attending interviews at the partner factories (columns 1 and 2) and whether the women traveled to the factories with study women or non-study companions (Columns 3-6). Each column represents a separate regression. All regressions include strata fixed effects. Controls include baseline values of variables in Table 1 and Table A2. Randomization inference p-values are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

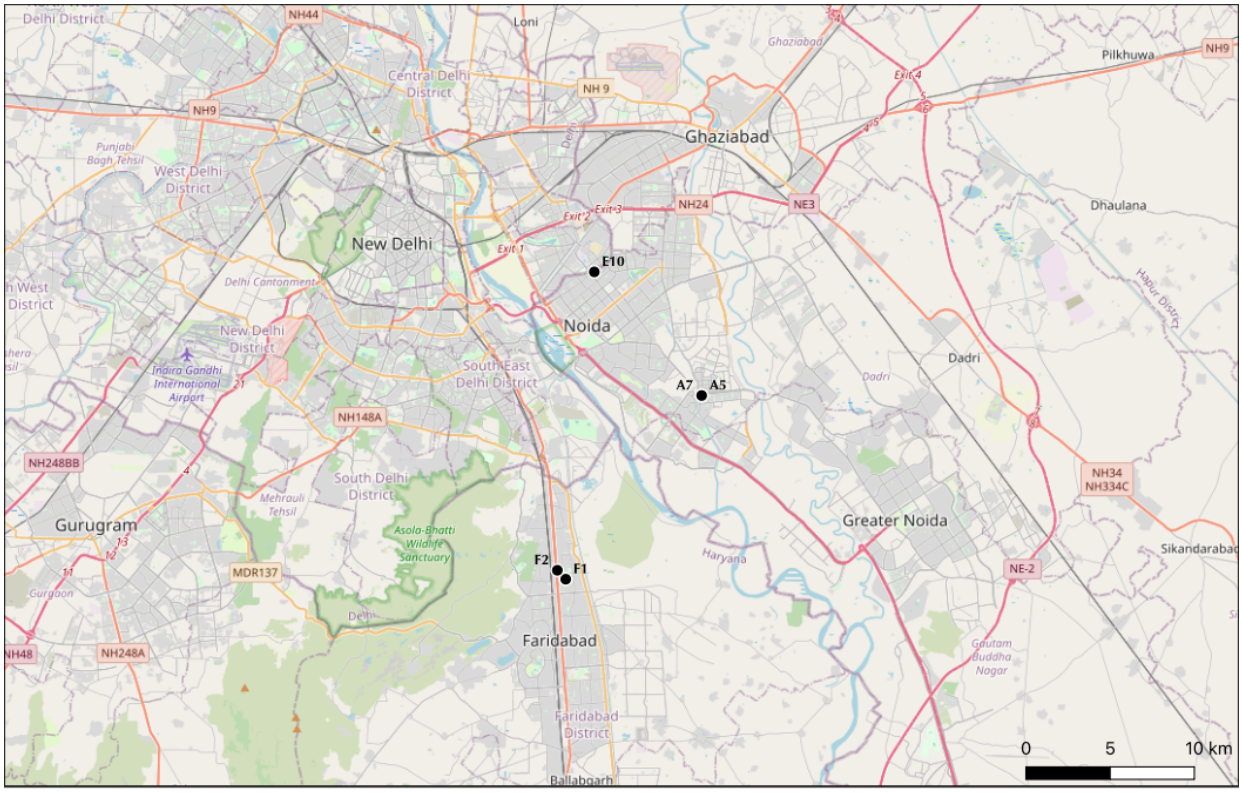
Table A8: Effects on Job Search at Endline - Randomization Inference

	= 1 if made job search trips		Number of job search trips		= 1 if made job search trips with women from neighborhood	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Travel Buddy (β_1)	0.120**	0.121**	0.349**	0.337**	0.106***	0.112***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Peer Effect (β_2)	0.031	0.032	0.252	0.227	0.025	0.030
	(0.48)	(0.48)	(0.20)	(0.21)	(0.39)	(0.36)
p-value: $\beta_1 = \beta_2$	0.05	0.05	0.39	0.34	0.02	0.01
Controls	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Control Mean	0.160	0.160	0.330	0.330	0.330	0.330
Neighborhoods	104	104	104	104	104	104
Observations	560	560	560	560	560	560

Notes: TThis table presents intent-to-treat (ITT) treatment effects on women's job search trips outside the interview experiment as reported by women during Endline Surveys. The number of observations is less than the study sample since it only includes observations for women that we were able to follow up for the endline surveys. The recall period for the three outcomes is 6 weeks post completion of interviews at the partner factories. In Columns (1)-(2), we measure the effects on the likelihood of making a job search trip in the last 45 days. This includes visits to employers in search of jobs. In Columns (3)-(4), we measure the effects on the number of visits made to the employers. In Columns (5)-(6), we measure the effects on the probability of making such a visit accompanied by other women from the neighborhood. It is an indicator variable that takes value 1 if women made any such trip accompanied by women from the neighborhood. All regressions include strata fixed effects. Controls include baseline values of variables in Table A2. Randomization inference p-values are in parentheses. ***, **, and * represent significance at 1%, 5%, and 10%, respectively.

Appendix B: Experimental Design

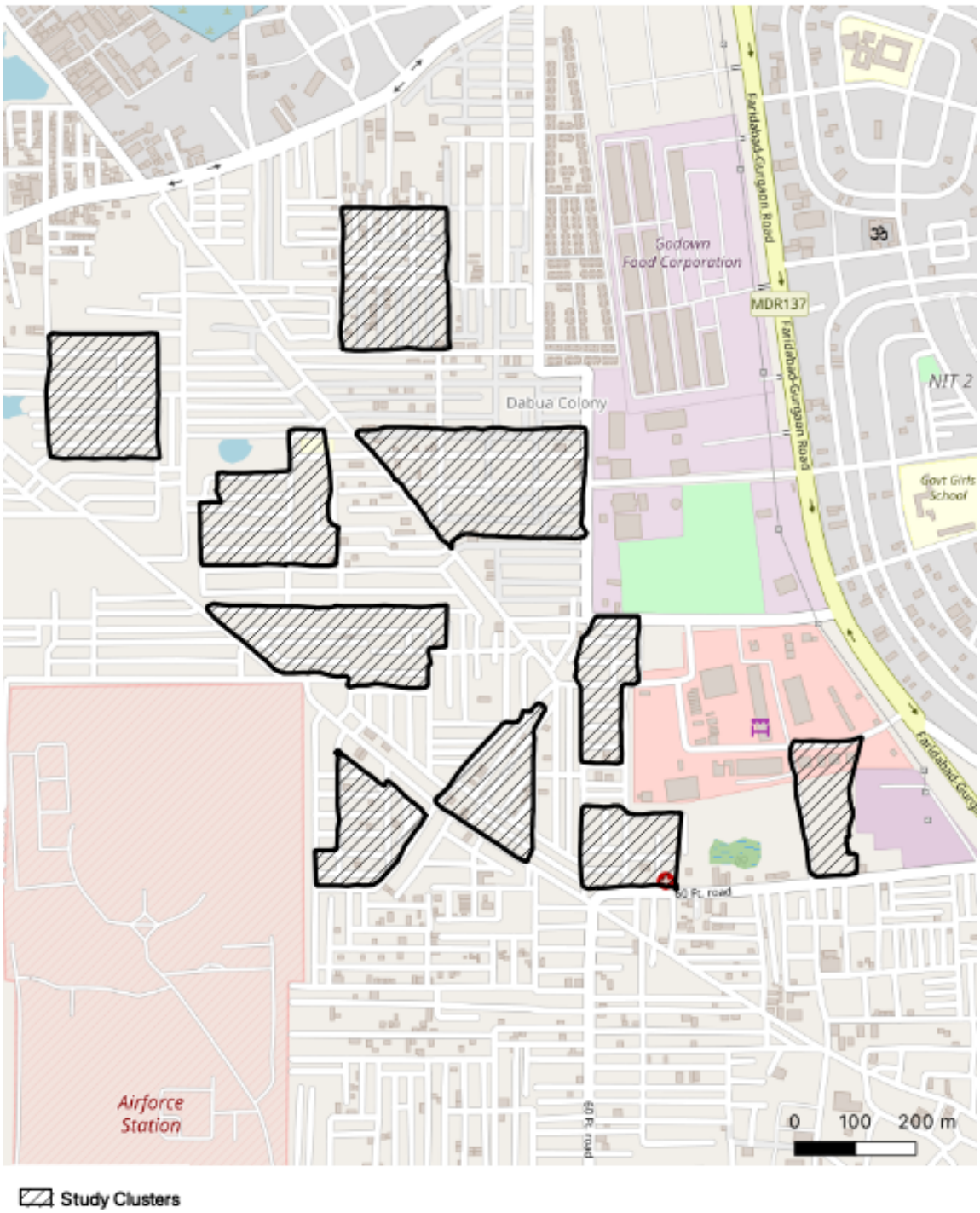
Figure B1: Locations of partner factories



● Partner factory locations in Faridabad and Noida (NCR)

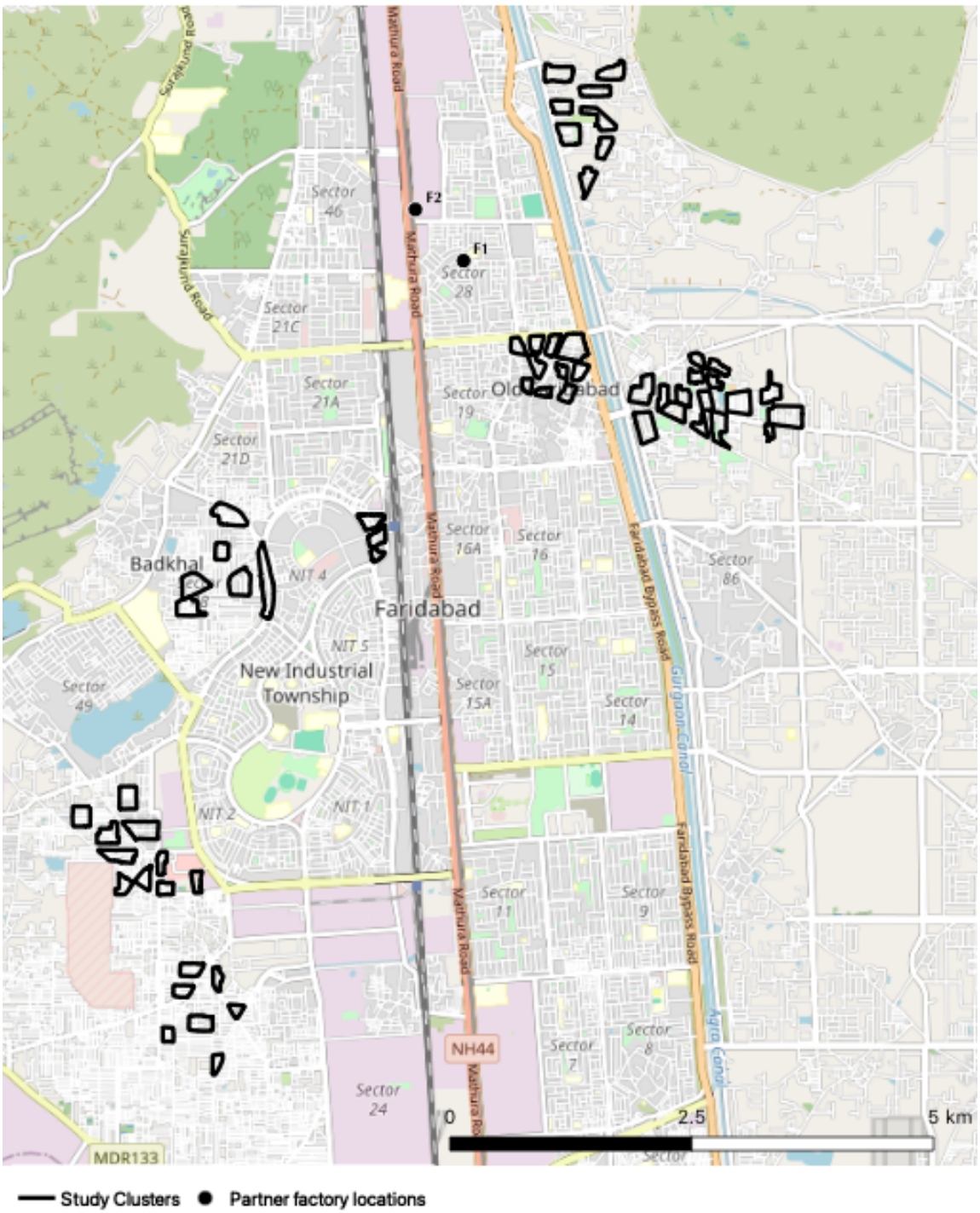
Notes: This figure shows the locations of our 5 partner factory units in Faridabad and Noida.

Figure B2: Map of selected study clusters - a closer look



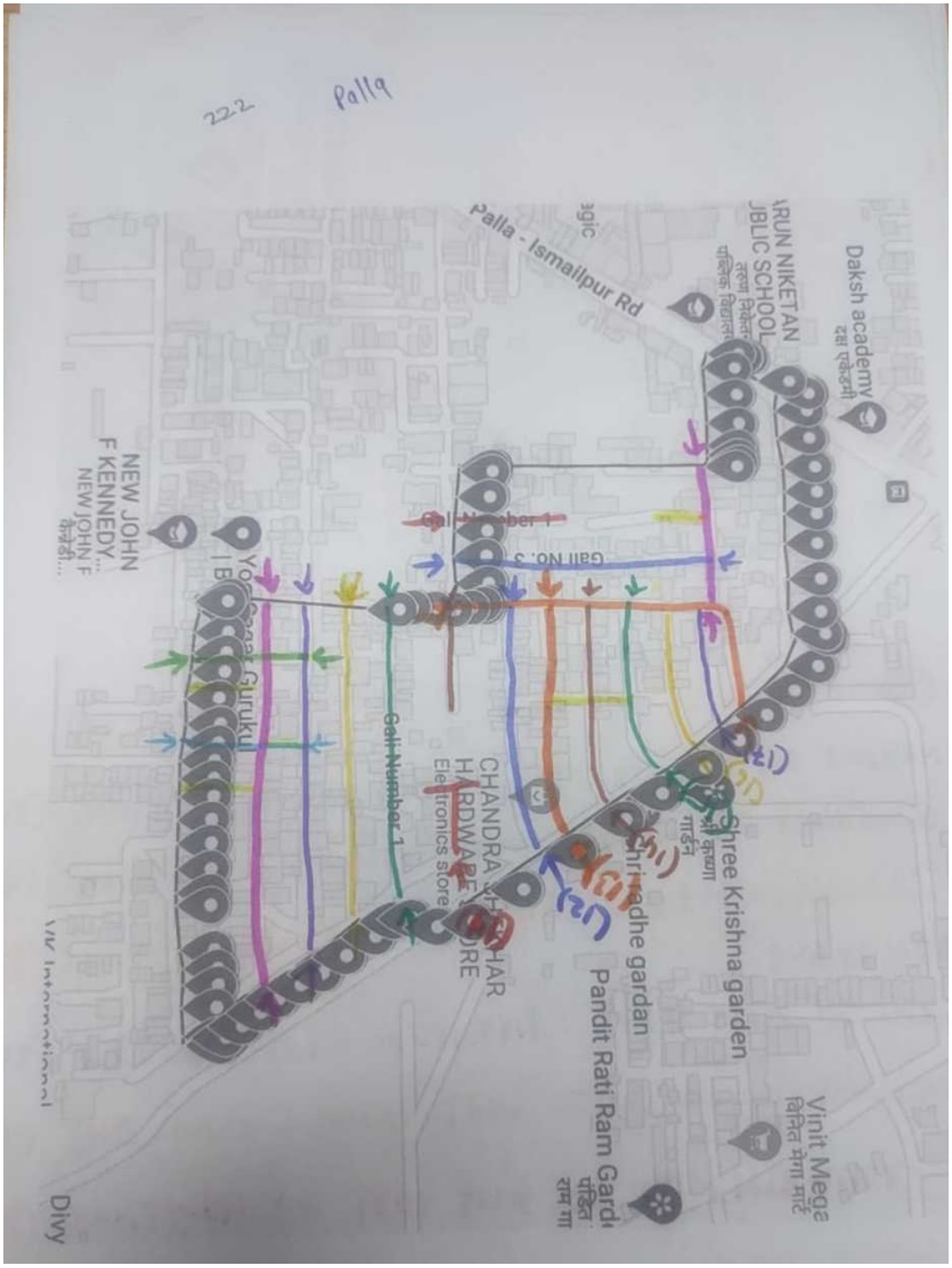
Notes: This figure shows zoomed in study clusters in Faridabad

Figure B3: Map of study clusters near two factory locations



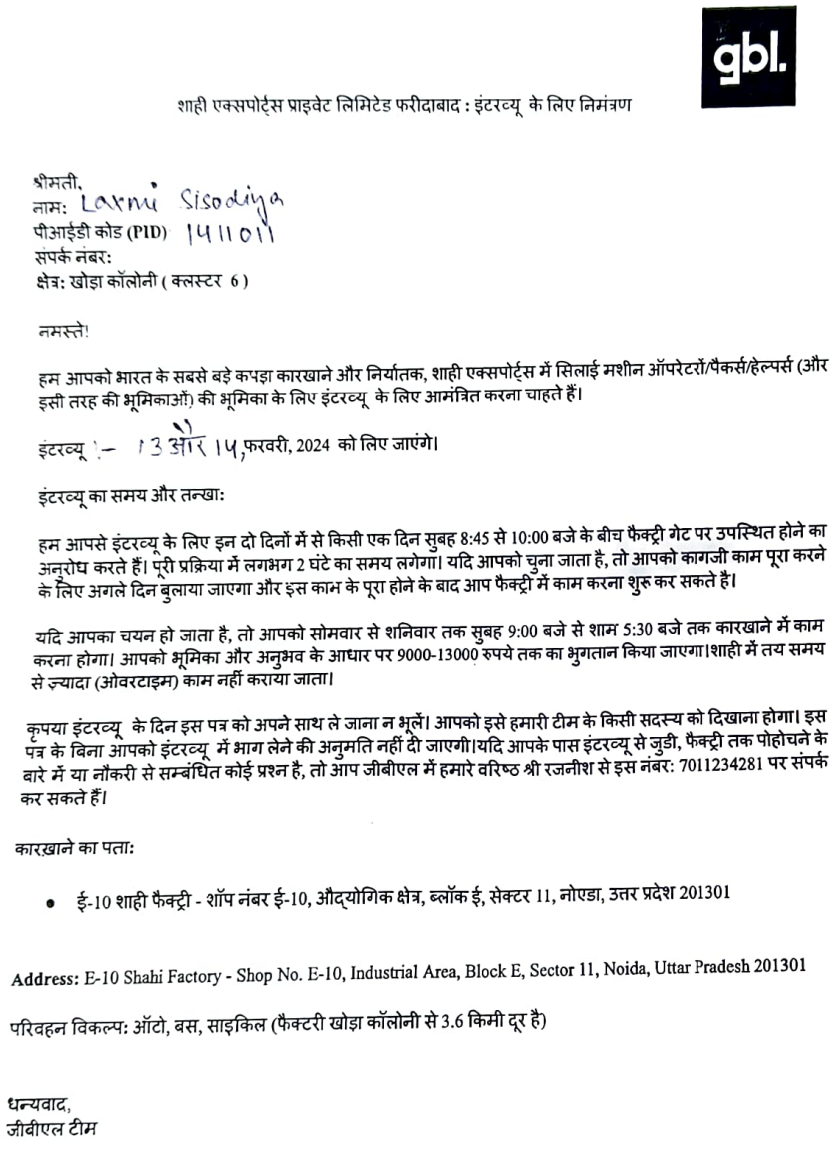
Notes: This figure shows the study clusters around 2 of the 5 partner factory units in Faridabad. The boundaries as shown in the figure were created by enumerators on foot using SurveyCTO's *geotrace* feature.

Figure B4: Cluster mapping for random sampling



Notes: This figure shows a map consisting of identified housing lanes and entry points to a study cluster.

Figure B5: Interview Invitation Letter



शाही एक्सपोर्ट्स प्राइवेट लिमिटेड फरीदाबाद : इंटरव्यू के लिए निमंत्रण

श्रीमती,
नाम: Laxmi Sisodiya
पीआईडी कोड (PID) 141011
संपर्क नंबर:
क्षेत्र: खोड़ा कॉलोनी (क्लस्टर 6)

नमस्ते!

हम आपको भारत के सबसे बड़े कपड़ा कारखाने और निर्यातक, शाही एक्सपोर्ट्स में सिलाई मशीन ऑपरेटरों/पैकर्स/हेल्पर्स (और इसी तरह की भूमिकाओं) की भूमिका के लिए इंटरव्यू के लिए आमंत्रित करना चाहते हैं।

इंटरव्यू :- 13 और 14, फरवरी, 2024 को लिए जाएंगे।

इंटरव्यू का समय और तन्खा:

हम आपसे इंटरव्यू के लिए इन दो दिनों में से किसी एक दिन सुबह 8:45 से 10:00 बजे के बीच फैक्ट्री गेट पर उपस्थित होने का अनुरोध करते हैं। पूरी प्रक्रिया में लगभग 2 घंटे का समय लगेगा। यदि आपको चुना जाता है, तो आपको कागजी काम पूरा करने के लिए अगले दिन बुलाया जाएगा और इस काम के पूरा होने के बाद आप फैक्ट्री में काम करना शुरू कर सकते हैं।

यदि आपका चयन हो जाता है, तो आपको सोमवार से शनिवार तक सुबह 9:00 बजे से शाम 5:30 बजे तक कारखाने में काम करना होगा। आपको भूमिका और अनुभव के आधार पर 9000-13000 रुपये तक का भुगतान किया जाएगा।शाही में तय समय से ज़्यादा (ओवरटाइम) काम नहीं कराया जाता।

कृपया इंटरव्यू के दिन इस पत्र को अपने साथ ले जाना न भूलें। आपको इसे हमारी टीम के किसी सदस्य को दिखाना होगा। इस पत्र के बिना आपको इंटरव्यू में भाग लेने की अनुमति नहीं दी जाएगी।यदि आपके पास इंटरव्यू से जुड़ी, फैक्ट्री तक पोहोचने के बारे में या नौकरी से सम्बंधित कोई प्रश्न है, तो आप जीबीएल में हमारे वरिष्ठ श्री रजनीश से इस नंबर: 7011234281 पर संपर्क कर सकते हैं।

कारख़ाने का पता:

- ई-10 शाही फैक्ट्री - शॉप नंबर ई-10, औद्योगिक क्षेत्र, ब्लॉक ई, सेक्टर 11, नोएडा, उत्तर प्रदेश 201301

Address: E-10 Shahi Factory - Shop No. E-10, Industrial Area, Block E, Sector 11, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201301

परिवहन विकल्प: ऑटो, बस, साइकिल (फैक्टरी खोड़ा कॉलोनी से 3.6 किमी दूर है)

धन्यवाद,
जीबीएल टीम

Notes: This figure shows an example of an interview intervention letter provided to a woman. The letter contains the name of the women, ID assigned to the woman, dates of interview, the partner factory's name and address. It also contains the phone number of field team members for the woman to reach out if she has any questions or concerns. Women were asked to bring this letter along on the day of the interview to help us identify study women at the factory gate. However, in case women didn't bring this letter, we used their phone numbers to distinguish study women from the non study women.

Table B1: Content of Intervention Meetings

	Travel Buddy	Peer Effect	Control
Content of meetings			
Introduction of enumerator	✓	✓	✓
Women introduction to each other	✓	✓	✗
Introduction about factory	✓	✓	✓
Details about job & trial	✓	✓	✓
About traveling together	✓	✗	✗
How to reach to the factory	✓	✓	✓
Time for women to socialize	✓	✓	✗
Whatsapp group	✓	✓	✗

Notes: This table lists the content of meetings for intervention meetings across the three groups.