Worker Productivity Impacts of Climate Change Induced Salinization*

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Abstract

Climate change-induced salinization (CCIS) has aggravated the global safe drinking water crisis, particularly in vulnerable coastal regions of low-income countries. However, little is known about the economic impacts of high salt intake resulting from CCIS. Using 12 rounds of high-frequency data collected from 615 factory workers in Khulna, Bangladesh, we examine the effects of high salt exposure on worker productivity along both intensive (worker efficiency conditional on showing up for work) and extensive (worker absenteeism due to sickness) margins. Utilizing within-worker variation over time and exogenous variation over the hotter summer months, we find that high salt intake via drinking water is associated with a 1.69 percentage-point (3%) decrease in worker efficiency and a 0.5-day (96%) increase in absenteeism due to illness for workers with above-median age. There is significant heterogeneity by gender and type of work - efficiency losses and absenteeism are larger for male workers and those engaged in physically intensive work. We identify hypertension as the likely mechanism: above median-age workers exposed to high salt intake are 53% more likely to be hypertensive. While the strong negative link between high salt intake and worker efficiency, mediated by hypertension, underscores the significant economic losses and public health risks posed by CCIS, our findings on the short-term responsiveness of blood pressure to salt intake also suggest that targeted policy interventions could effectively reverse these adverse effects, safeguarding both health and livelihoods in affected communities.

Keywords: Salinization, worker productivity, hypertension, coastal Bangladesh

JEL Classification: I15, J24, O10

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1 Introduction

Safe drinking water is crucial to ensure public health, quality of life, and food safety, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2024). However, over 844 million people worldwide lack access to adequate safe drinking water, and climate change-induced salinization (CCIS) in low-elevated coastal zones has exacerbated this water crisis in many parts of the world (Collins et al., 2018). As of January 2023, around 898 million people live in low-elevation coastal zones globally, of which more than 420 million reside in low-income countries (Barbier, 2015; Reimann, Vafeidis, and Honsel, 2023). Such populations are particularly susceptible to the adverse impacts of the decline in the freshwater supply. Studies show strong links between drinking saline water and health risks, including preterm delivery due to pre-eclampsia, acute respiratory infections, skin diseases, and malnutrition (Khan, Xun, Ahsan, and Vineis, 2011; Rahaman, Rahman, and Nazimuzzaman, 2020). A growing concern is that increased water salinity might lead to an epidemic of hypertension and other chronic illnesses in the coastal areas of low-income economies (Caminade, McIntyre, and Jones, 2019; Vineis, Chan, and Khan, 2011). Therefore, such salinization could have adverse economic impacts due to the strong link between worker health, productivity, and growth (Dupas and Miguel, 2017; Schultz, 2005; Strauss, 1985). This study aims to understand the economic impacts of CCIS by investigating the effects of saline water consumption on worker productivity among low-income coastal populations.

The context of our study is Bangladesh, a country apt for the study of CCIS due to its vulnerability to the effects of climate change given its geographic proximity to the ocean and low-lying topography. Over several decades, there has been a significant increase in river salinity in Bangladesh owing to CCIS. This increased salinity has affected the primary drinking water sources in the coastal areas including rivers, ponds (for surface water), and tube wells (for groundwater) (Haque, 2006). Within coastal Bangladesh, we focus on the jute industry in Khulna - a coastal division that contains two-thirds of the country's total jute factories. Bangladesh accounts for 33% of global jute production and employs an estimated 50,000 workers in this sector(Somoy News, 2023).

A key strength of this study is the rigorous high-frequency data collection from 615 workers at a jute factory in Khulna. We conducted 12 rounds of in-person surveys, beginning with a baseline from October to December 2022, followed by 11 monthly follow-ups throughout 2023. This rich dataset enables us to account for seasonality and examine lagged impacts of salt exposure—analyses that would not be possible with data collected at a lower frequency.

Using the panel regression methodology with fixed effects, we examine the relationship between high salt exposure and worker productivity after accounting for individual, month, work shift, and day-of-the-week specific effects. We also utilize the exogenous seasonal variation in groundwater salinity to identify the causal effect of high salt intake. We collected data on workers' salt intake through their drinking water consumption, calculated by multiplying the quantity of water consumed from each source (i.e., home and factory) by the respective levels of groundwater salinity, measured directly at factories and workers' homes using dip-based salinity testers. For productivity, we study two key margins: the intensive margin (worker efficiency conditional on showing up for work) and the extensive margin of whether they show up for work (i.e. worker absenteeism due to sickness). Our study especially focuses on older workers (above the median age of 34 years), given the vast medical literature documenting that increased age is associated with a significant increase in the prevalence of hypertension with salt intake (Anderson, 1999; Bray, Vollmer, Sacks, Obarzanek, Svetkey, Appel, and Group, 2004; Frisoli, Schmieder, Grodzicki, and Messerli, 2012; Lionakis, Mendrinos, Sanidas, Favatas, and Georgopoulou, 2012; Lloyd-Jones, Evans, and Levy, 2005).

We document three key results. First, on the intensive margin of productivity, high salt intake is associated with a 1.69 percentage-point (3% of mean efficiency) decrease in efficiency for workers with above-median age ($p < 0.05$). These magnitudes are larger than the estimated impacts of large particulate matter (PM) pollution shocks on worker productivity among garments sector workers in India (Adhvaryu, Kala, and Nyshadham, 2022). Second, on the extensive margin of worker absenteeism, high salt intake for above median-age workers is associated with a 0.48-day (93% of mean sick absence) increase in the number of days absent due to sickness ($p < 0.1$). Third, examining heterogeneous effects, we document significantly larger impacts of high salt intake for male workers and workers engaged in manual work - a decrease of 7 to 8% in mean efficiency ($p < 0.05$) and more than doubled the sick absence rate ($p < 0.05$).

We identify hypertension (high blood pressure) as the potential mechanism for these negative effects of high salt intake on worker productivity. Our data shows a strong association between high salt intake and hypertension: above median-age workers exposed to high salt intake were 6 percentage points (53% of mean hypertension rate) more likely to be hypertensive ($p < 0.01$). Furthermore, male workers of above median age and exposed to a high salt intake were 11 percentage points (98% of mean hypertension rate) more likely to be hypertensive ($p < 0.01$). These findings are consistent with the heterogeneous effects of

gender on efficiency, thereby further supporting our hypothesis that hypertension acts as a potential mechanism for the relationship between CCIS and worker productivity.

To assess the robustness of our findings, we examine the lagged effects of high salt exposure from previous months. Our data suggests that the negative effect of high salt intake on worker efficiency is an acute response rather than a cumulative effect. We find no evidence of delayed effects from high salt exposure in the previous months - conditional on contemporaneous high salt intake in the current month, high salt intake (via water consumption) in the previous 1, 2, 3, or 11 months does not display a statistically significant relationship with worker efficiency. This finding aligns with medical literature, which indicates that the health effects of sodium intake are more immediate and acute rather than delayed (Gupta et al., 2023).

The productivity losses that we document are significant for both factories and workers. A simple back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that high salt intake for workers above the median age could cost the factory USD 35,016 monthly. Across 291 jute mills in Bangladesh[1], this is a significant loss of USD 10.4 million in monthly revenues for the jute industry alone in Bangladesh. Furthermore, high salt intake for above median-age workers could lead to a monthly wage loss of 130 Taka (approximately USD 1.1), which is 2 percent of their average monthly earnings from this job.

In addition to the economic losses, our findings underscore significant immediate and long-term public health implications, including a considerable disease burden and potential public health crises. Based on the hypertension-related age-standardized mortality risk in Bangladesh and disease burden calculations presented in (Islam et al., 2023), we estimate that approximately 27% workers in our sample could develop hypertension due to high salt exposure, leading to an estimated 0.26 hypertension-related deaths and 6.12 Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs). When scaled to Khulna's employed population of approximately 3.2 million workers, this suggests a potential 868,000 cases of hypertension, leading to an estimated 836 hypertension-related deaths and 19,693 Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) annually. Among workers above the median age, the impact is similarly substantial, with around 80 additional cases of hypertension, corresponding to 0.12 deaths and 3 DALYs. These estimates underscore the urgent need for targeted public health interventions and policy measures, especially given that hypertension mostly remains undetected and untreated among these vulnerable coastal communities.

[1] https://www.juteyarn-bjsa.org/statistical-information/

Our study contributes to the literature in several important ways. While there is growing evidence that climate change brings persistent negative impacts in the developing world, most studies focus on climate-induced temperature, precipitation, and pollution extremes (Adhvaryu et al., 2022; Banerjee and Maharaj, 2020; Burgess, 2017; Deschenes, 2014; Shah and Steinberg, 2017). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to examine the worker productivity impacts of climate change-induced salinization (CCIS). In assessing the potential role of hypertension, we contribute to two further strands of the literature. One strand examines the adverse impact of CCIS on health. Existing studies have documented a strong link between salinity exposure and hypertension, cardiovascular and renal diseases, and infectious disease (i.e., skin diseases, fever, dysentery, and diarrhea) outbreaks in coastal areas globally (Abedin, Habiba, and Shaw, 2012; Gheorghe, Griffiths, Murphy, Legido-Quigley, Lamptey, and Perel, 2018; Khanam, Lindeboom, Razzaque, Niessen, and Milton, 2015; Rahaman et al., 2020; Scheelbeek et al., 2017). In the context of Bangladesh, studies show that exposure to excessive salinity induces the prevalence of severe health problems in pregnant mothers (i.e., gestational hypertension, (pre)eclampsia, and miscarriages) (Khan et al., 2011; Khan, Scheelbeek, Shilpi, Chan, Mojumder, Rahman, Haines, and Vineis, 2014; Talukder, Rutherford, Phung, Islam, and Chu, 2016) (Guimbeau, Ji, Long, and Menon, 2024) and chronic and acute nutritional deficiency among children (Das, Islam, Hadiujjaman, Dutta, and Morshed, 2019).

A separate strand of the literature studies the link between hypertension and worker productivity in developed country settings (Asakura, Ademi, Liew, and Zomer, 2021; Hird, Zomer, Owen, Magliano, Liew, and Ademi, 2019; MacLeod, Ye, Donald, and Wang, 2022). Here, the causes of hypertension are primarily due to lifestyle choices including a high-sodium diet. However, there is limited evidence on the relationship between hypertension and worker productivity in developing country contexts, where individuals are exposed to high salt intake due to CCIS and rising groundwater salinity. Moreover, these are also settings where individuals are less likely to have access to medication for hypertension owing to poor public health capacity and financial constraints. Our results that explore the role played by hypertension in the link between CCIS and worker productivity contribute to this gap in the literature.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the background and setting, Section 3 discusses the data and key variables, and Section 4 discusses the empirical specification. The impacts of CCIS on worker productivity are discussed in Section 5, and we explore hypertension as a potential mechanism in Section 6. Section 7 describes

our robustness checks and Section 8 concludes.

2 Background and Setting

Our study area is Bangladesh, a country vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to its geographic proximity to the ocean and low-lying topography. Coastal Bangladesh is a part of the flat Ganges Delta that streams water from the Himalayas into the Bay of Bengal and it accounts for 32 percent of the land area and 25.7 percent of the population of Bangladesh (Dasgupta, 2015). River Salinity in the coastal area depends on the volume of freshwater discharges from the upstream river systems, the salinity of the Bay of Bengal near the coast, and the circulation pattern of the coastal waters induced by the ocean and strong tidal currents. Since 1948, there has been a significant increase (around 45%) in river salinity due to reduced freshwater inflows from the transboundary Ganges River, elevated sea level, siltation of Ganga tributaries, and other rivers. This increased salinity is affecting the primary drinking water sources in the coastal areas including rivers, ponds (for surface water), and tube wells (for groundwater) (Haque, 2006). There is heavy dependency on rainwater and people face acute drinking water scarcity during the dry seasons due to recurrent droughts (Abedin and Shaw, 2018; Atiq Rahman and Ravenscroft, 2003).

Within coastal Bangladesh, we focus on jute factories in the Khulna division. Khulna is suitable for this study because of its position as a coastal division threatened by climate change, rising sea levels, and drinking water salinity. The mean sodium concentration in potable water sources in Khulna ranges from 700 to 1500 mg/L, which can easily lead to crossing the WHO-recommended level of 2000 mg/L of sodium intake just by drinking 2 to 3 liter of water[2] (Scheelbeek et al., 2017; Shammi, Rahman, Bondad, and Bodrud-Doza, 2019). Furthermore, Khulna is home to two-thirds of the total number of jute factories in Bangladesh, and private jute factories in Khulna have seen a significant rise in exports and global market interest in recent years (Somoy Business Desk, 2023). The increased demand for multipurpose jute products like smart bags, carpets, and jewelry, especially in Middle Eastern countries, highlights the industry's potential for substantial economic contributions. The jute industry also plays a pivotal role in climate change prevention, given the environmentally friendly and bio-degradable nature of jute fiber, which provides a sustainable alternative to plastic bags in the long run. Enhanced worker productivity can help maintain competitive

[2] A recommended minimum daily quantity of water for drinking is 5.3 liters (L)/person in Bangladesh (World Health Organization, 2021)

production costs, which is crucial for sustaining and expanding business in the global market. Therefore, understanding the barriers to improving worker productivity in the jute industry, particularly in the Khulna region, is essential for finding effective solutions and ensuring the long-term success of the jute sector and the overall economy.

We collected high-frequency data on workers at a Jute factory in Khulna, Bangladesh. The factory operates in two production units – Yarn (henceforth, Production Unit 1) and Jute Bags (henceforth, Production Unit 2). Both units have different sections that use various types of machinery. There are 8 sections under Production Unit 1 – Batching, Carding, Drawing, Spinning, Roll Winding, Precision Winding, Twisting, and Roping; whereas Production Unit 2 has 7 sections – Damping, Calendering, Lapping and Cutting, Bangla Loom, S4A Loom (China Loom), Herakle & Hemming, and Hand Sewing. Appendix Table A1 summarizes the activities performed under each section. There are three different working shift schedules. In Unit 1, three shifts are running continuously for 24 hours: Morning (6:00 AM to 2:00 PM), Evening (2:00 PM to 10:00 PM), and Night (10:00 PM to 6:00 AM). Workers in Unit-1 rotate shifts every 15 days, moving from Morning to Evening, Evening to Night, and Night to Morning. In contrast, Unit 2 has a more stable schedule: Morning and Evening shifts are fixed, while the Night shift runs only occasionally based on product demand. On average, 395 workers work in the factory on a daily basis and produce 50-51 tons of yarn (16-17 tons per shift). Approximately 80% of the workforce are employed in Production Unit 1. This unit requires relatively less manual work than production unit 2 because spinning, roll winding, and precision winding involve higher mechanization levels than looming and herakle & hemming, where manual intervention and workmanship are needed.

3 Data and Key Variables

For this study, we selected the factory sections based on two criteria – (a) there are at least 25 workers and (b) output can be measured at the individual level. Six of the 15 sections satisfied these criteria - Roll winding, Precision winding, and Spinning from production unit 1 and Bangla loom, S4A loom (China loom), and Herakle & Hemming from production unit 2.

We implemented a rigorous high-frequency data collection protocol, conducting baseline assessments of 549 factory workers from October to December 2022, followed by 11 rounds of follow-up data collection throughout 2023. The distribution of the workers across sections is as follows: Roll Winding (45.86%), Precision winding (18.74%), Bangla loom (13.98%), S4A

loom (17.21%), and Herakle & Hemming (5.01%).

Data on workers' demographic characteristics, health habits, work experience, and earnings information was collected during the first month of the survey. We also collected the height, weight, and arm circumference of the participants to compute body mass index (BMI) and MUAC using a measuring tape (cm) and a weighing scale (kg), respectively. During each of the subsequent 11 follow-up surveys, data on water consumption by source, groundwater salinity, physical and psychological health, blood pressure measurement, and production of each worker[3] was collected once every month along with the baseline. Data on worker absence rate and underlying reasons were collected from follow-ups 6 to 11. All information was collected during the morning and evening shifts because outsiders are not allowed in the factory during the night shift.

Worker Output and Productivity We collected a standardized measure of productivity (efficiency) of the workers across a range of tasks in the jute factory. First, we recorded the actual production (i.e., product weight, number of pieces of cloth) of each worker along with specific production-related data for each section, which includes information on the number of machines operated, working time (break times and time wasted due to machine-related issues subtracted from the total shift hours), and input, product, and machine specifications. Next, we calculate a production benchmark or the maximum possible output for each section utilizing the production-related data and industry-standard production formulas. Productivity is then measured by comparing the actual production to the calculated production benchmark, and efficiency is expressed as a percentage. Appendix section B.1 discusses the data collection process and the efficiency calculation formulas for each section of the factory in detail.

Absence Due to Sickness Since followup six, workers were asked to recall the total number of days they did not come to the factory last month and the reasons behind it. The total number of days in a month a worker was absent due to sickness is used to define the 'Sickness Absence' for that particular month.

[3]Except the helpers in the spinning section. The spinning section has two types of workers - machine operator and helper. A helper's primary job is to help arrange the yarn and move the product from the spinning section to the storage room of the next production process. We did not include helpers in this study due to the inability to clearly define and measure their individual-level output.

Blood Pressure Individual-level blood pressure measures were collected monthly using digital blood pressure monitoring devices. The monitor uses the oscillometric method, a non-invasive way to measure blood pressure using an automated cuff. Field enumerators who collected health information and blood pressure measurements were trained and supervised by a medical health professional who occasionally visited the data collection site.[4] The values of the systolic and diastolic blood pressures are used to report the respondent's blood pressure, setting cut-off points 'Normal' for systolic blood pressure under 120 mmHg and the diastolic blood pressure under 80 mmHg as followed in national surveys (Association, 2020; James et al., 2014). Hypertension is measured when systolic blood pressure is greater than or equal to 140 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure is greater than or equal to 90 mmHg (Chakraborty, Khan, Dibaba, Khan, Ahmed, and Islam, 2019; Nahian, Ahmed, Lázár, Hutton, Salehin, and Streatfield, 2018). Respondents who were taking medication for hypertension at the time of the survey are considered hypertensive.

Ground Water Salinity Digital Water salinity testing machines were used to measure the salinity of drinking water at respondents' homes and the factory. We collected information on the amount of water workers usually drink from each source. Workers were given uniquely identified 250 ml bottles the day before an interview to collect the drinking water they typically drink at home. Enumerators collected the bottles from workers during the health data collection. For factory water, samples were collected from four designated sources (two water sources from each production unit) on each survey day. After collecting the samples, water salinity was measured by CON30 TDS (mg/l)/Conductivity (μS/cm)/Salinity (mg/l) testers. In this paper, we reported the salinity measure in terms of the salinity. A worker's total salt intake via drinking water consumption is calculated by multiplying the amount of water from each source (i.e., home, factory) by the groundwater salinity of the respective source and measured in milligrams. The WHO recommends a maximum concentration of 200 mg/L for sodium (Na) and 250 mg/L for chloride (Cl) in drinking water (approximately, 442 mg/L salinity) which has been standardized based on taste threshold, not on health considerations. The standard value of sodium chloride intake adopted by Bangladesh is 150-600 mg/L (approximately, 265-1060 mg/L salinity)(Akter et al., 2016; Benneyworth et al., 2016). However, in case of lack of non-availability of alternative sources, a significantly higher level of chloride intake of 1000 mg/L (approximately, 1769 mg/L salinity) is considered

[4]If the blood pressure is much higher than the normal level (i.e., systolic pressure 200 or more and diastolic pressure below 60 or 65 then the respondent were advised to go to the factory medical center immediately.

acceptable for the coastal regions in Bangladesh(Ahmed, 2000; Nahian et al., 2018).

3.1 Summary Statistics

Table 1 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics, health conditions, and water consumption and salt intake patterns of the study sample in the baseline. Panel A shows that the average age of the sample workers is 33.48 years with a standard deviation of 12.59 years, indicating a relatively young population with a wide age range. 58.9% of the sample workers are male and 61.3% of the sample is married. In terms of educational attainment, 12.8% of the participants reported having no formal schooling. Panel B shows the overall nutritional status of the workers. 61.9% of the participants fall within the healthy BMI range of 18.5 to 25. On the other hand, 14.4% are identified as malnourished, based on the Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC).

Panel C reports the blood pressure measures of the sample. The mean systolic blood pressure is 117.46 mmHg, while the mean diastolic blood pressure is 74.21 mmHg. Hypertension - a systolic blood pressure of 180 mmHg or higher or a diastolic blood pressure of 90 mmHg or higher - is prevalent among 13.9% of the workers.

Panel D shows the amount of water consumed from home and the factory, along with the salinity levels in the respective water sources. Participants consume, on average, 4.75 liters of water per day - 3.51 liters from home and around 1.24 liters from the factory daily. The salinity of home water is notably high, with a mean concentration of 910.97 mg/L, while factory water has a mean salinity of 792.71 mg/L. This high groundwater salinity results in an average daily salt intake of 3,977.66 mg solely from water consumption, with some individuals exceeding 8,700 mg per day. Moreover, 25% of the respondents consume more than the WHO-recommended maximum daily salt intake of 5,000 mg (or 2,000 mg/day of sodium) (WHO, 2024). Appendix Figure A1 shows the variation in average groundwater salinity (mg/L), water consumption (liters), and salt intake from water (mg/day) by month. Our data shows that despite a decrease in groundwater salinity, the total salt intake of factory workers is higher during the summer (May to August).[5] - a significant increase in water intake in the hot and humid months (on average, our sample workers drink 0.54 liters of

[5]We collected monthly average temperature data (°C) from 1991 to 2022 from the Bangladesh climate database. Based on the historical temperature data, we define three seasons: 1) Hot and Humid Summer including May to August with an average temperature of 28.65°C; 2) Autumn including September to November with an average temperature of 26.67°C; and 3) Winter including December to February-March with an average temperature of 23.55°.

more water in summer months compared to non-summer months) compensates for the relatively lower salinity, leading to an overall increase in salt intake compared to the cooler, drier months.

One implication of the high salinity in drinking water sources is its potential effect on the perception of water taste among the population. We see that most respondents are unaware and accustomed to the elevated sodium concentration in their drinking water. Only 12.5% of participants believe that the taste of their water has changed over the years (Panel E). Among those who noticed a change, 47.1% feel that their water tastes more saline now. This lack of awareness among the coastal population underscores the urgent need for targeted policy interventions and public health measures to address the CCIS issue.

Appendix Figure A2 presents the distribution of worker production efficiency as a density plot using the Epanechnikov kernel smoothing method. It shows the variation in worker productivity: worker's efficiency might be on average as little as 35% or as much as 85% efficiency in a given month, with the average efficiency falling around 60%.

4 Empirical Specification

While an ideal experiment to study high salt intake and productivity might randomly assign some workers to have a high salt intake, this is neither ethical nor feasible in practice. To account for the influence of time-invariant factors such as gender, education, and one's section/unit in the factory, we use the rich monthly panel data that we collected, and run, as a starting point, the following equation for worker i in shift s on day d of the week at time (month) t:

$$Y_{isdt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HighSaltIntake_{it} + \alpha_i + \delta_s + \lambda_d + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{isdt} \quad (1)$$

where Y_{isdt} is our outcome variable of interest (worker productivity, absenteeism, or a potential mechanism such as hypertension). $HighSaltIntake_{it}$ is defined as an indicator equal to 1 if the worker's salt intake (combined over the home and factory water consumption) was 0.25 SD above the sample mean[6]. We include a rich set of fixed effects: α_i, δ_s, λ_d, and γ_t, represent the individual, shift, day of the week, and month fixed effects, respectively.

[6]Around one-third of the sample gets a value of 1 for 'High Salt Intake' at the 0.25 SD above the sample mean cutoff point. Our findings persist at lower SD cutoff points (even when 'High Salt Intake' is defined as an indicator equal to 1 if the worker's salt intake via water consumption is above the mean). A quadratic functional form to study the optimal salt intake did not yield statistically significant estimates.

The coefficient on $HighSaltIntake_{it}$, β_1, is our coefficient of interest. To account for the within-individual correlations over time, standard errors are clustered at the worker level.

A vast medical literature documents that increased age is associated with a significant increase in the prevalence of hypertension with salt intake (Anderson, 1999; Bray et al., 2004; Frisoli et al., 2012; Lionakis et al., 2012; Lloyd-Jones et al., 2005).[7] To study the impact of CCIS on worker productivity for older workers, we run, as our primary specification, the following equation for worker i in shift s on the day d of the week at time (month) t:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{isdt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HighSaltIntake_{it} + \beta_2 AboveMedianAge_i \\ + \beta_3 HighSaltIntake_{it} * AboveMedianAge_i + \alpha_i + \delta_s + \lambda_d + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{isdt} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

where $AboveMedianAge_i$ is an indicator equal to 1 if the worker was above the median age of workers in our sample. Here, the coefficient on the interaction term, β_3, is our coefficient of interest. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level.

Despite our rich set of fixed effects, a potential concern with our empirical strategy might be that salt intake is endogenous and potentially correlated with unobservable time-varying factors that are also correlated with productivity. To address this concern, we use potentially exogenous variation over the summer months in Bangladesh (May to August), which when interacted with groundwater salinity, leads to exogenous variation in salt intake. We define the variable 'High groundwater salinity' based on the weighted average of salinity levels from the workers' home and factory water sources.[8] In this way, we distinguish between salinity and salt intake, to disentangle the endogenous response of workers drinking more water in the hotter summer months. Thus, we run the following alternative specification:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{isdt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 HighGroundwaterSalinity_t + \beta_2 AboveMedianAge_i + \beta_3 Summer_t \\ + \beta_4 HighGroundwaterSalinity_t * Summer_t + \beta_5 AboveMedianAge_i * Summer_t \\ + \beta_6 HighGroundwaterSalinity_t * AboveMedianAge_i \\ + \beta_7 HighGroundwaterSalinity_t * AboveMedianAge_i * Summer_t + \alpha_i + \delta_s + \lambda_d + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{isdt} \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where $Summer_t$ is an indicator for the summer months in Bangladesh (May to August) and

[7] For example, Bray et al. (2004); Frisoli et al. (2012) note that sodium reduction to a level of 1500 mg/d lowers blood pressure more in older adults than younger adults. In a trial, systolic blood pressure decreased by 8.1 mmHg in those aged 55 to 76 years, compared with 4.8 mmHg for adults aged 23 to 41 years.

[8] These weights do not vary by worker and are determined as the ratio of average water consumed from a source to the total average water consumption for that season.

$HighGroundwaterSalinity_t$ is an indicator variable taking the value 1 when groundwater salinity is more than 0.25 SD above the average groundwater salinity.

To study how the heterogeneous impacts differ by worker and task characteristics, we augment equation 2 and use the following specification:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{isdt} = {} & \beta_0 + \beta_1 HighSaltIntake_{it} + \beta_2 AboveMedianAge_i + \beta_3 X_i \\ & + \beta_4 HighSaltIntake_{it} * X_i + \beta_5 AboveMedianAge_i * X_i + \beta_6 HighSaltIntake_{it} * AboveMedianAge_i \\ & + \beta_7 HighSaltIntake_{it} * AboveMedianAge_i * X_i + \alpha_i + \delta_s + \lambda_d + \gamma_t + \varepsilon_{isdt} \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

where X_i is a worker or task-specific characteristic of interest. We focus on two characteristics. First, in line with medical literature documenting the heterogeneous effects of blood pressure by gender (see, for example, Lloyd-Sherlock, Beard, Minicuci, Ebrahim, and Chatterji (2014); Pimenta (2012); Safar and Smulyan (2004)), we study the differential impacts on gender. Second, we hypothesize that workers performing tasks that are more physically intensive in nature may be more affected by CCIS. This hypothesis is in line with that of Adhvaryu et al. (2022), who studies whether workers performing tasks that are more cognitively challenging may be more affected by pollution. We construct the variable $JobisManual_i$, an indicator equal to 1 if the worker was assigned to production unit 2. As detailed in Section 2, this unit performed manual tasks including Damping, Calendering, Lapping and Cutting, Bangla Loom, S4A Loom (China Loom), Herakle & Hemming, and Hand Sewing. Here, the coefficient on the triple interaction term, β_7, is our coefficient of interest. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level.

5 The Impacts of CCIS on Worker Productivity

5.1 Main Results on Efficiency and Absenteeism

Table 2 presents our main results of the effect of CCIS on worker efficiency conditional on showing up for work (i.e. an intensive margin of productivity). While column (1) shows a negative but statistically insignificant relationship between salt intake and efficiency in the overall sample, column (2) highlights that high salt intake is associated with a 1.69 percentage-point decrease in efficiency for workers above median age ($p < 0.05$). On a base productivity of 60% across all workers, this represents a 3% decrease in productivity. These magnitudes are larger than the estimated impacts of large particulate matter (PM) pollution shocks on worker productivity – for example, Adhvaryu et al. (2022) estimate that a 1 SD

increase in pollution decreases efficiency by about 0.8 percentage points or 1.6% of the mean productivity among garments sector workers in India.

While efficiency is an important intensive margin measure of worker productivity, we also assess the effect of CCIS on the extensive margin of worker absenteeism. Columns (3) and (4) of Table 2 examine the relationship between high salt intake and absenteeism due to sickness. Column (3) highlights that high salt intake is associated with a 0.5-day increase in the number of days absent from the factory due to sickness in the past month ($p < 0.01$). On a base of an average of 0.51 days absent per month, this represents a large, 96% increase in absenteeism. Column (4) shows that for workers above median age, high salt intake is associated with a 0.48-day increase in the number of days absent due to sickness – i.e., a 92% increase ($p < 0.1$).

Our finding that the relationship between salt intake and efficiency is most salient for older workers is further highlighted in Table A2 and Figure A3. Columns 1 and 2 of Table A2 shows that the negative effect of high salt intake on productivity (both intensive and extensive margin) increases with workers' age. Figure A3 explores the heterogeneity in the relationship between high salt intake and efficiency by 10-year age bins. Except for the 41-50-year age bin, our point estimates monotonically decrease with age, highlighting the heterogeneous effect of high salt intake on efficiency by age. While we do not observe statistically significant relationships for workers aged 30 and below, every age bin greater than age 30 displays statistically significant differences at the 10% level. This is consistent with the medical literature documenting that increased age is associated with a significant increase in the prevalence of hypertension (Anderson, 1999; Bray et al., 2004; Lionakis et al., 2012; Lloyd-Jones et al., 2005).

Taken together, our results highlight large and statistically significant impacts of CCIS on the intensive and extensive margins of worker productivity.

5.2 Main Results Utilizing Variation over Summer Months

As noted in Section 4, a potential concern with our empirical strategy might be that salt intake is endogenous and potentially correlated with unobservable time-varying factors that are also correlated with productivity. To address this concern, we estimate specification 3 and present these results in Table 3 and Table A4. We find that workers exposed to high groundwater salinity in the summer months were 2.59 percentage points less efficient ($p < 0.1$) and had a 0.78-day increase ($p < 0.5$) in sickness absence. These workers were also 6.9 percentage points more likely to be hypertensive ($p < 0.05$) as shown in Table A4. This evidence using

an alternative identification strategy adds credibility to our claim that high salt intake has a negative impact on worker productivity.

5.3 Heterogeneous Effects

In Table 4, we explore two important dimensions of heterogeneity that potentially impact the relationship between CCIS and worker productivity: gender and the manual nature of work. The triple interaction term in column (1) highlights that male workers of above median age exposed to high salt intake had 4.8 percentage points (or 8%) lower efficiency relative to female workers of below median age who were not exposed to high salt intake ($p < 0.01$). Furthermore, column (3) highlights that male workers of above median age exposed to high salt intake were associated with a 1.2-day increase in the number of days absent from the factory due to sickness in the past month ($p < 0.05$).

The triple interaction term in column (2) highlights that above-median-age workers engaged in more manual work and exposed to high salt intake had 4.12 percentage points (or 7%) lower efficiency relative to below-median-age workers not engaged in manual work who were not exposed to high salt ($p < 0.05$). In addition, column (4) shows that above-median-age workers engaged in more manual work and exposed to high salt intake were associated with a 1.1-day increase in the number of days absent from the factory due to sickness in the past month ($p < 0.05$). This heterogeneity aligns with findings by Adhvaryu et al. (2022), who find that workers performing tasks with complexity at least 1 SD above the average exhibit productivity losses roughly 3 times the size of those performing less complex tasks. It is also consistent with medical literature documenting the increased blood pressure and cardiovascular risks of high sodium intake and the importance of balanced sodium intake for optimal health(Agócs, Sugár, and Szabó, 2020; O'Brien, 2016).

6 Potential Mechanism: Hypertension

We focus on hypertension (high blood pressure) as a potential mechanism for our results for two reasons. First, a vast medical literature has documented the impacts of high salt intake on hypertension (Frisoli et al., 2012; He, Markandu, and MacGregor, 2005; Youssef, 2022). For example, Scheelbeek et al. (2017) document in a study in coastal Bangladesh that a 100 mg/L reduction in sodium in drinking water was associated with a reduction in systolic/diastolic blood pressure by 0.95/0.57 mmHg, and the odds of hypertension were lower by 14%. Second, a number of studies have established a relationship between hypertension and low

productivity (see, for example, Asakura et al. (2021); Hird et al. (2019); MacLeod et al. (2022)). Taken together, blood pressure is a potential mechanism for the relationship between salt intake and productivity.

Table 5 highlights the relationship between high salt intake and blood pressure. Column (1) highlights that workers exposed to high salt intake were 3.1 percentage points more likely to be hypertensive ($p < 0.05$). Column (4) further highlights that above median-age workers exposed to high salt intake were 6 percentage points more likely to be hypertensive ($p < 0.1$). On a base of 11.3%, this represents a large, 53% association with hypertension for above median-age workers. Since hypertension is defined on the basis of systolic and diastolic blood pressure readings, columns (2) and (3) examine these separately. Columns (2) and (3) show that workers exposed to high salt intake had 1.23 mmHg higher systolic blood pressure readings ($p < 0.01$) and 0.51 mmHg higher diastolic blood pressure ($p < 0.1$). Similarly, column (5) shows that above median-age workers exposed to high salt intake had 2.25 mmHg higher systolic blood pressure readings ($p < 0.01$) and 1.39 mmHg higher diastolic blood pressure ($p < 0.05$).

Our results on hypertension are also consistent with the heterogeneous effects explored in section 5.3. Table A3 shows that male workers of above median age and exposed to a high salt intake were 11 percentage points more likely to be hypertensive ($p < 0.05$). In contrast, no statistically significant relationship is seen for female workers of above median age exposed to high salt intake. These results are consistent with the findings shown in Table 4 for efficiency, thereby further supporting our hypothesis that hypertension acts as a potential mechanism for the relationship between CCIS and worker productivity.

7 Robustness Check: Ruling out Lagged Effects

Since our results focus on the relationship between salt intake in the contemporaneous month and efficiency, a potential concern might be that lags of salt intake in previous months may also impact efficiency. Table A5 explores the relationship between lagged salt intake and worker efficiency. In columns (1) and (3), we study the impact of adding the previous month's salt intake (i.e. a one-month lag) to our main regression specification (2). We do not observe any statistically significant impact of high salt intake in the previous month on efficiency and absenteeism for above median-age workers. In columns (2) and (4), we add two additional lags (2 and 3-month lags, respectively). Here too, we do not observe any statistically significant impact of high salt intake in the previous 3 months on efficiency and

absenteeism for above median age workers. These regressions suggest that lagged salt intake does not impact worker productivity.

These results are consistent with evidence in the medical literature concerning the short-term relationship between salt intake and high blood pressure. For example, Gupta et al. (2023) conducted a study in which participants were randomized to either a high-sodium diet with 2,200 mg of sodium added to their usual daily diet, or a low-sodium diet with a total of 500 mg sodium daily for one week. Participants then switched to the opposite diet for one week. The authors found that lowering blood pressure through dietary sodium reduction can be achieved safely and rapidly within one week. Our results on the lack of lagged effects are consistent with the medical literature documenting the short-lived effects of salt intake on blood pressure.

8 Discussion and Conclusion

Using 12 rounds of data collected at a high monthly frequency from factory workers in Bangladesh, we document statistically significant relationships between climate change-induced salinization (CCIS) and worker productivity. On the intensive margin of productivity (i.e. conditional on showing up for work), we find that high salt intake is associated with a 3% decrease in efficiency for workers above median age ($p < 0.05$). On the extensive margin of worker absenteeism, high salt intake for above median-age workers is associated with a 94% increase in the number of days absent due to sickness ($p < 0.1$). Examining heterogeneous effects, we document significantly larger impacts of 7-8% decreases in efficiency for male workers and workers engaged in manual work ($p < 0.01$).

These losses are significant for both workers and factories. For workers, we perform a simple back-of-the-envelope calculation to understand wage losses. The workers are paid by shift and are paid, on average, 270 Taka per shift. Workers work, on average, 1.07 shifts per day. Given our absenteeism impact of 0.52 days per month, we estimate that high salt intake for above median-age workers could cause $270 * 1.07 * 0.52 = 150$ Taka (approximately USD 1.30) wage losses monthly.

From the factory perspective, we also perform a simple back-of-the-envelope calculation to understand revenue losses. On average, the factory had monthly revenues of 139 million Taka (USD 1.19 million) during our study period. Given our 3% efficiency impact, we estimate that high salt intake for above median-age workers could cost the factory USD 35,600 monthly. Across 291 jute mills in Bangladesh, this is a significant loss of USD 10.4

million in monthly revenues for the jute industry alone in Bangladesh.

Fortunately, our examination of hypertension as a potential mechanism offers hope for policy. We rule out lagged effects from high salt intake in previous months (conditional on contemporaneous high salt intake in the current month), consistent with medical literature that documents the short-lived response of blood pressure to salt intake, often within a week. This suggests that interventions aimed at reducing the salt intake among workers could reverse the negative effects on worker efficiency and absenteeism. We leave the exploration of adaptation and mitigation interventions to CCIS for future research.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1: Socio Demographic Profile, Water and Salt Intake of Participants

	Mean	SD
Panel A: Demographic Information		
Age (in Years)	33.483	12.471
Male	0.621	0.485
No schooling	0.125	0.331
Married	0.605	0.489
N	615	
Panel B: Body Mass Index and Malnourishment		
Healthy (18.5 ≤ BMI ≤ 25)	0.607	0.489
Malnourished (MUAC: Male≤23cm, Female≤22cm)	0.164	0.371
Panel C: Blood Pressure		
Hypertension (Systolic≥180 mmHg or Diastolic≥90 mmHg)	0.133	0.340
Systolic Blood Pressure (mmHg)	117.312	20.307
Diastolic Blood Pressure (mmHg)	73.758	12.347
Panel D: Drinking Water Source, Groundwater Salinity, Salt Intake via Water		
Water from Home (litre)	3.511	1.854
Water from Factory (litre)	1.238	1.213
Salinity in Home Water (mg/L)	910.966	484.560
Salinity in Factory Water (mg/L)	792.711	196.837
Salt Intake via Water Consumption (mg)	3,977.664	1,938.631
Panel E: Perception on Water Taste		
Water Taste Changed Over Years	0.125	0.331
Water Tastes More Saline | Water Taste Changed	0.471	0.503

Note: The mean values in Panel A report the average age of the workers and, the percentage of workers who are male, have no schooling, and are married. Panel B shows the workers' health status based on BMI and MUAC which we calculated from the recorded height, weight, and arm measurements. Panel C reports the average systolic and diastolic blood pressure and prevalence of hypertension among the study sample. Panel D reports workers' water consumption (in liter) by source, salinity level in the respective water, and workers' total salt intake (in milligrams) via drinking water consumption - the amount of water from each source (i.e., home, factory) multiplied by the groundwater salinity. In Panel E, we report workers' baseline perception of water taste.

Table 2: Effect of Salt Intake (via Water Consumption) on Worker Productivity

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Efficiency	Efficiency	Sickness Absence	Sickness Absence
High Salt Intake	-0.390	0.394	0.493***	0.277*
	(0.428)	(0.520)	(0.133)	(0.143)
Above Median Age * High Salt Intake		-1.689**		0.475*
		(0.856)		(0.270)
Individual FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shift FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of the Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Production capacity (%)-All Workers	60.038	60.038		
Mean Salt Intake from Water (mg/day)	3471.985	3471.985		
Average Monthly Absence due to Sickness (Day)			0.514	0.514
Salary Per Shift (BDT)			269.723	269.723
Average Monthly Earnings from this Job (BDT)			6934.182	6934.182
Observations	4344	4344	2186	2186
R-sqr	0.012	0.013	0.017	0.020

Note: This table reports the regression of workers' production efficiency and sickness absence on high salt intake. Columns 1 and 3 show the estimates of equation 1 and Columns 2 and 4 show the estimates of equation 2. 'Efficiency' is the ratio of actual output to the calculated production benchmark (output at machine capacity), expressed as a percentage. 'Sickness Absence' is measured as the total number of days a worker was absent last month due to sickness.'High salt intake' is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the salt intake via water consumption is greater than 0.25 standard deviations above the average salt intake via drinking water. 'Above median age' is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the worker's age is above the median age (34 years) of sample workers. Both regressions include fixed effects of month, shift, section, and day of the week. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 3: Effect of High Groundwater Salinity Exposure During Summer Months on Worker Productivity

	(1)	(2)
	Efficiency	Sickness Absence
High Groundwater Salinity	0.197	0.106
	(0.675)	(0.183)
Above Median Age * High Groundwater Salinity	0.388	0.619*
	(1.175)	(0.322)
Above Median Age * High Groundwater Salinity * Summer	-2.587*	0.775**
	(1.530)	(0.356)
Individual FE	Yes	Yes
Month FE	Yes	Yes
Shift FE	Yes	Yes
Day of the Week FE	Yes	Yes
Mean Production capacity (%)-All Workers	60.038	60.038
Average Monthly Absence due to Sickness (Day)	0.514	0.514
Groundwater Salinity in Non-Summer Season (mg/day)	781.695	781.695
Groundwater Salinity in Summer (mg/day)	736.926	736.926
Observations	4402	4675
R-sqr	0.014	0.021

Note: This table shows the effect on workers' efficiency and sickness absence of high groundwater salinity by season. 'Efficiency' is the ratio of actual output to the calculated production benchmark (output at machine capacity), expressed as a percentage. 'Sickness Absence' is measured as the total number of days a worker was absent last month due to sickness. Groundwater salinity is measured as a weighted average of the salinity levels from workers' home and factory water sources, with the weights determined by the seasonal water consumption ratios (the ratio of average water consumed from a source to the total average water consumption for that season). The binary variable "High groundwater salinity" is assigned a value of 1 if the groundwater salinity is more than 0.25 standard deviations above the average groundwater salinity. 'Above median age' takes a value of 1 if the worker's age is above the sample median age. The variable 'Summer' takes a value of 1 if a month falls under the summer season (May to August). The table reports the estimates of equation 4 that includes the fixed effects of the month, shift, section, and day of the week. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 4: Heterogeneous Effect of Salt Intake (via Water Consumption) on Worker Productivity

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Efficiency	Efficiency	Sickness Absence	Sickness Absence
High Salt Intake	-0.614	0.144	0.486	0.289
	(0.644)	(0.565)	(0.368)	(0.195)
Above Median Age * High Salt Intake	0.967	-0.123	-0.215	-0.032
	(0.837)	(0.836)	(0.422)	(0.262)
Male * High Salt Intake	1.618*		-0.303	
	(0.967)		(0.387)	
Above Median Age * Male * High Salt Intake	-4.842***		1.190**	
	(1.634)		(0.583)	
Job is Manual * High Salt Intake		0.875		-0.041
		(1.233)		(0.245)
Above Median Age * Job is Manual * High Salt Intake		-4.116**		1.086**
		(1.959)		(0.517)
Individual FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shift FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of the Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Production capacity (%)-All Workers	60.038	60.038		
Mean Salt Intake from Water (mg/day)	3471.985	3471.985		
Average Monthly Absence due to Sickness (Day)			0.514	0.514
Salary Per Shift (BDT)			269.723	269.723
Average Monthly Earnings from this Job (BDT)			6934.182	6934.182
Observations	4344	4344	2186	2186
R-sqr	0.015	0.014	0.024	0.025

Note: This table shows the heterogeneous effect of high salt intake on workers' efficiency by gender and type of work. The table reports the estimates of equation 4, where Columns 1 and 3 show the heterogeneous effect by gender whereas Columns 2 and 4 show the heterogeneous effect by the type of work. 'Efficiency' is the ratio of actual output to the calculated production benchmark (output at machine capacity), expressed as a percentage. 'Sickness Absence' is measured as the total number of days a worker was absent last month due to sickness. 'High salt intake' is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if salt intake via water consumption is greater than 0.25 standard deviations above the average salt intake via drinking water. 'Above median age' takes a value of 1 if the worker's age is above the sample median age of 34 years. Variable 'Male' indicates whether the worker is male, 0 otherwise. The variable 'Job is Manual' takes a value of 1 if the worker is in production unit 2, and 0 otherwise. Both regressions include fixed effects of month, shift, section, and day of the week. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 5: Effect of Salt Intake (via Water Consumption) on Blood Pressure

	(1) Hypertensive	(2) Systolic Blood Pressure	(3) Diastolic Blood Pressure	(4) Hypertensive	(5) Systolic Blood Pressure	(6) Diastolic Blood Pressure
High Salt Intake	0.031**	1.226***	0.511*	-0.012	0.202	-0.122
	(0.013)	(0.407)	(0.281)	(0.010)	(0.484)	(0.383)
Above Median Age * High Salt Intake				0.060***	2.245***	1.387**
				(0.017)	(0.815)	(0.555)
Individual FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shift FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of the Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hypertensive	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.113
Mean Systolic Blood Pressure (mmHg)	112.209	112.209	112.209	112.209	112.209	112.209
Mean Diastolic Blood Pressure (mmHg)	70.924	70.924	70.924	70.924	70.924	70.924
Observations	4959	4959	4959	4959	4959	4959
R-sqr	0.052	0.109	0.108	0.019	0.110	0.109

Note: This table shows the effect of high salt intake on hypertension. 'Hypertension' is an indicator variable that takes a value of 1 if the systolic blood pressure is greater than or equal to 140 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure is greater than or equal to 90 mmHg. Individuals currently taking medication for hypertension are also considered hypertensive. Systolic blood pressure is the pressure in the arteries when the heart contracts (systole). This is usually less than 140 millimeters of mercury (mmHg). Diastolic blood pressure is the pressure in the arteries when the heart is relaxed (diastole), and it is usually less than 90 mmHg in adults. 'High salt intake' is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the salt intake via water consumption is greater than 0.25 standard deviations above the average salt intake via drinking water. 'Above median age' is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the worker's age is above the median age of sample workers. Columns 1, 2, and 3 report the estimates of equation 1 whereas Columns 3, 4, and 5 report the estimates of equation 2. All regressions include the fixed effects of the month, shift, section, and day of the week. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

A Appendix

Figure A1: Groundwater Salinity, Water Consumption, and Salt Intake by Month

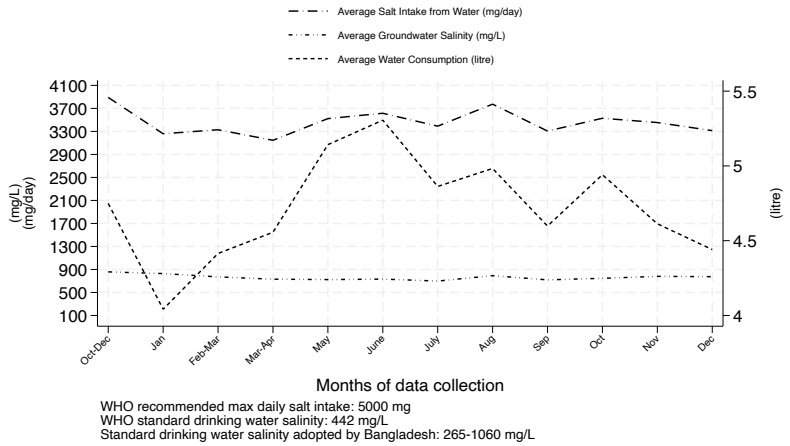


Figure A2: Distribution of Worker Efficiency

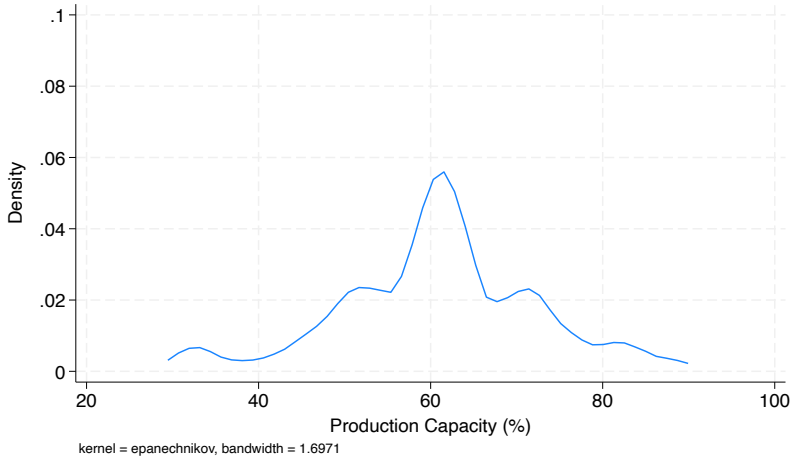
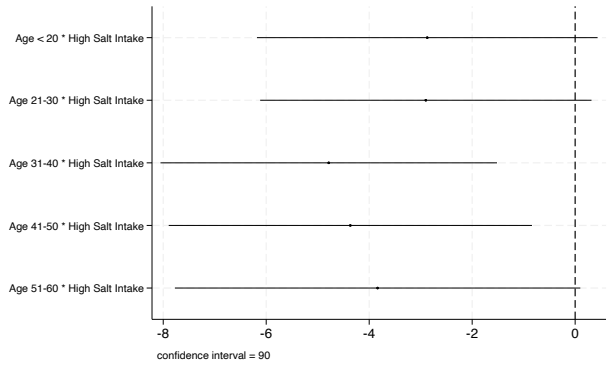


Figure A1 shows the variation in average groundwater salinity levels, water consumption, and salt intake by month. The data indicates that workers' water consumption increases significantly during the hot and humid months (May to August), leading to higher salt intake despite a slight decrease in groundwater salinity. In contrast, water consumption is relatively lower during the dry months (October to February), resulting in lower average salt intake. Figure A2 depicts the distribution of worker efficiency, showing that in a given month, worker's efficiency might be on average as little as 32% or as much as 83% efficiency, with the average efficiency falling around 59%

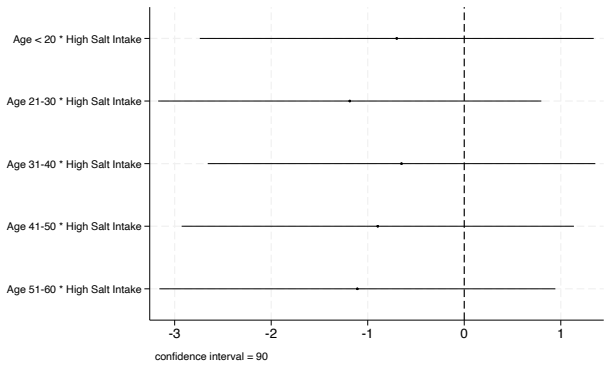
Table A1: Factory Production Process

Unit 1		Unit 2	
Section	Activity	Section	Activity
Batching	In this section, jute is selected for a batch, piecing up, softening and lubricating, and conditioning or piling.	Damping	Rolled woven cloth is unrolled and water is sprinkled on it continuously to provide desired moisture.
Carding	Jute fibers are formed into ribbons called "sliver". Carding is a combining operation where jute reeds are split and extraneous matters are removed. It is the process by which long reeds of jute pass through high speed-pinned roller and are broken down into an entangled mass and delivered in the form of ribbon with uniform weight per unit length	Calendering	A process similar to the ironing of fabric.
Drawing	A process for reducing sliver width and thickness by simultaneously mixing 4 to 6 slivers together. There are three types of Drawing Frame machines. The first one makes blending, equalizing the sliver, and doubling two or more slivers, level and provide quality and color. The Second Drawing machine makes a more uniform sliver and reduces the jute to a suitable size for the third drawing. The Third Drawing machine is of high speed making the sliver more crimpled and suitable for spinning.	Bangla Loom	Traditional Carpet Weaving using the yarn from the Roll and Precision winding
Spinning	Producing yarn from silver obtained from the Third drawing - Capable of producing quality yarns at high efficiency with auto-doffing arrangements.	S4A Loom (China Loom)	Modern Carpet Weaving
Roll Winding	Provides yarn as spools and cops for beaming and weaving operations.	Lapping and cutting	Fabrics are folded into the required size on the lapping machine while the sacking cloth is cut to the required length for making bags for different sizes under the cutting process.
Precision Winding	wind materials with high accuracy and consistency.	Herakle & Hemming	Hemming stitches the raw edges while the Herakle machine stitches at the side.
Twisting	Used to fold and twist more than one yarn. Helps to produce quality yarns for premium fabrics.	Hand Sewing	Tie and Bundle
Roping	Turning the yarns and threads into plies		

Figure A3: Effect of Salt Intake (via Water Consumption) on Productivity (by Age Groups)



(a) Efficiency



(b) Sickness Absence

Note: This figure shows the heterogeneous effect of high salt intake on workers' productivity by different age groups. We estimate a modified version of equation 2 (without the individual fixed effects), where indicators of six different age groups and interactions of high salt intake with the age groups are used instead of the 'above median age' indicator. Panel (a) shows the heterogeneous effect on efficiency and Panel (b) shows the effect on sickness absence by age groups. The figure displays the coefficients of the interaction terms of high salt intake and age groups with a 90% confidence interval. The regression includes fixed effects of the month, shift, section, and day of the week. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level.

Table A2: Effect of Salt Intake (via Water Consumption) on Worker Productivity

	(1)	(2)
	Efficiency	Sickness Absence
High Salt Intake	1.933	-0.722
	(1.177)	(0.448)
Age * High Salt Intake	-0.068*	0.029**
	(0.036)	(0.015)
Month FE	Yes	Yes
Shift FE	Yes	Yes
Section FE	Yes	Yes
Day of the Week FE	Yes	Yes
Mean Production capacity (%)-All Workers	60.038	
Mean Salt Intake from Water (mg/day)	3471.985	
Average Monthly Absence due to Sickness (Day)		0.514
Salary Per Shift (BDT)		269.723
Average Monthly Earnings from this Job (BDT)		6934.182
Observations	4344	4617
R-sqr	0.013	0.024

Note: This table reports the regression of workers' production efficiency and sickness absence on high salt intake. Columns 1 shows the estimates of equation 1 and Columns 2 shows the estimates of equation 2. 'Efficiency' is the ratio of actual output to the calculated production benchmark (output at machine capacity), expressed as a percentage. 'Sickness Absence' is measured as the total number of days a worker was absent last month due to sickness.'High salt intake' is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the salt intake via water consumption is greater than 0.25 standard deviations above the average salt intake via drinking water. 'Age' is a continuous variable that shows worker's age in years. Both regressions include fixed effects of month, shift, section, and day of the week. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table A3: Heterogeneous Effect of Salt Intake on Blood Pressure (by Gender and Type of Work)

	(1)	(2)
	Hypertension	Hypertension
High Salt Intake	-0.003	0.000
	(0.016)	(0.009)
Above Median Age * High Salt Intake	0.002	0.020
	(0.020)	(0.018)
Above Median Age * Male * High Salt Intake	0.111***	
	(0.034)	
Above Median Age * Job is Manual * High Salt Intake		0.112***
		(0.040)
Month FE	Yes	Yes
Shift FE	Yes	Yes
Section FE	Yes	Yes
Day of the Week FE	Yes	Yes
Hypertension (Systolic>=180 mmHg or Diastolic>=90 mmHg)	0.113	0.113
Observations	4959	4959
R-sqr	0.023	0.022

Note: This table shows the heterogeneous effect of high salt intake on blood pressure by gender and reports the estimates of equation 4. 'Hypertension' is an indicator variable that takes a value of 1 if the systolic blood pressure is greater than or equal to 140 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure is greater than or equal to 90 mmHg. Individuals currently taking medication for hypertension are also considered hypertensive. 'High salt intake' is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if salt intake via water consumption is greater than 0.25 standard deviations above the average salt intake via drinking water. 'Above median age' takes a value of 1 if the worker's age is above the sample median age of 34 years. Variable 'Male' indicates whether the worker is male, 0 otherwise. The regression includes fixed effects of the month, shift, section, and day of the week. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table A4: Effect of High Groundwater Salinity Exposure During Summer Months on Hypertension

	(1) Hypertension
High Groundwater Salinity	-0.007
	(0.013)
Above Median Age * High Groundwater Salinity	0.020
	(0.022)
Above Median Age * High Groundwater Salinity * Summer	0.069**
	(0.034)
Month FE	Yes
Shift FE	Yes
Section FE	Yes
Day of the Week FE	Yes
Hypertension (Systolic>=180 mmHg or Diastolic>=90 mmHg)	0.113
Groundwater Salinity in Non-Summer Season (mg/day)	781.695
Groundwater Salinity in Summer (mg/day)	736.926
Observations	4961
R-sqr	0.019

Note: This table shows the effect of high groundwater salinity on hypertension. 'Hypertension' is an indicator variable that takes a value of 1 if the systolic blood pressure is greater than or equal to 140 mmHg or diastolic blood pressure is greater than or equal to 90 mmHg. Groundwater salinity is measured as a weighted average of the salinity levels from workers' home and factory water sources, with the weights determined by the seasonal water consumption ratios (the ratio of average water consumed from a source to the total average water consumption for that season). The binary variable "High groundwater salinity" is assigned a value of 1 if the groundwater salinity is more than 0.25 standard deviations above the average groundwater salinity. 'Above median age' takes a value of 1 if the worker's age is above the sample median age. The variable 'Summer' takes a value of 1 if a month falls under the summer season (May to August). The table reports the estimates of equation 4 that includes the fixed effects of the month, shift, section, and day of the week. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table A5: Lagged Effects of Salt Intake on Efficiency

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Efficiency	Efficiency	Sickness Absence	Sickness Absence
High Salt Intake (One Month Lag)	0.236	0.149	-0.021	0.014
	(0.504)	(0.687)	(0.122)	(0.113)
Above Median Age * High Salt Intake (One Month Lag)	0.229	-0.367	0.391	0.210
	(0.875)	(1.090)	(0.243)	(0.191)
Above Median Age * High Salt Intake		-2.623**		0.593**
		(1.081)		(0.256)
Above Median Age * High Salt Intake (Two Months Lag)		1.381		-0.080
		(1.087)		(0.200)
Above Median Age * High Salt Intake (Three Months Lag)		0.128		0.260
		(1.140)		(0.190)
Individual FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Month FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shift FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Day of the Week FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mean Production capacity (%)-All Workers	60.038	60.038		
Mean Salt Intake from Water (mg/day)	3471.985	3471.985		
Average Monthly Absence due to Sickness (Day)			0.514	0.514
Observations	4357	3183	4019	2864
R-sqr	0.014	0.016	0.016	0.020

Note: This table shows the lagged effect of high salt intake (high salt intake in previous months) on workers' production efficiency and reports the estimates of equation 2. 'Efficiency' is the ratio of actual output to the calculated production benchmark (output at machine capacity), expressed as a percentage. The lag salinity variables show workers' high salt intake (due to water consumption) from previous months. For example, 'High Salt Intake (One Month Lag)' takes a value of 1 if the salt intake via water consumption is greater than 0.25 standard deviations above the average salt intake via drinking water a month ago. Similarly, 'High Salt Intake (Two Months Lag)' and 'High Salt Intake (Three Months Lag)' take a value of 1 if the salt intake is greater than 0.25 standard deviations above the average salt intake via drinking water two and three months ago, respectively. 'High salt intake' takes a value of 1 if the salt intake in the current month is greater than 0.25 standard deviations above the average salt intake via drinking water, 0 otherwise. The variable 'High Salt Intake in Last 11 Months' is calculated by adding the number of months the worker had high salt intake (indicated by a value of 1) over the past 11 months. 'Above median age' is a binary variable that takes a value of 1 if the worker's age is above the median age (34 years) of sample workers. All regressions include fixed effects of month, shift, section, and day of the week. Standard errors are clustered at the worker level. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

B Data Appendix

B.1 Production Data Collection Process

During the baseline phase, the research and field management team held meetings with the factory supervisors to explain the study's objectives and data collection procedures. We clarified that our goal was to calculate worker productivity for research purposes, not to evaluate individual performance. The supervisors understood that this process would not impact workers' job security or benefits. They cooperated by helping us locate the workers and ensuring that the workers remained unaware of the monitoring of their activities and outputs. This collaboration was crucial for maintaining the integrity of the data collection process.

Recording Worker Activity and Output: Each week, we randomly selected workers to monitor and record their activity and production. Factory supervisors assisted our enumerators in identifying the machines each worker was operating on specific days. Once located, the enumerators tracked the workers' movements, documenting their activities, breaks, output, and other relevant details on productivity sheets. The enumerators moved around the factory continuously to observe and record the movements. Therefore, workers were unaware of which individuals were being monitored.

Product weights were measured and recorded in locations not visible to the workers to maintain anonymity. In Production Unit 1, helpers removed bobbins and spools from the machines, loaded them onto trolleys, and set them aside or took them to the storeroom. Then our enumerators measured the weight of completed spools to ensure workers did not know whose production was being tracked. In Production Unit 2, at the end of their shifts, workers in the Bangla and China Loom sections cut, wrapped, and placed the carpets on the weighing scale before leaving. A tally clerk then measured the products after the workers had left, with the enumerator recording the weights. Workers in the Herakle & Hemming section bundled their products (i.e., jute bags) with labeled names and placed them in the storeroom. Enumerators counted the bags at the end of each shift after the workers had left.

Efficiency Calculation: We calculated a production benchmark or the maximum possible output for each section utilizing the production-related data and industry-standard production formulas. Productivity is then measured by comparing the actual production to the calculated production benchmark, and efficiency is expressed as a percentage. Formulas

used for efficiency calculation for different sections are as follows:

Spinning

- **Production Formula (Kilograms)**

$$\frac{\text{RPM} \times \text{Count} \times 60 \times (\text{Working Hours-Break}) \times \text{No. of Spindles}}{\text{TPI} \times 36 \times 14400 \times 2.2046}$$

where, *Working Hours* = 7.5; Break = Prayer + Time lost due to mechanical issue

- **Machine Capacity: (Output at 100% efficiency)**

$$\text{Capacity Output} = \frac{3600 \times 13.75 \times 60 \times (7.5\text{-}0) \times 96}{3.8 \times 36 \times 14400 \times 2.2046} = \textit{490.60 KG}$$

- **Efficiency**

$$\text{Efficiency} = \frac{\text{Actual Output (per worker, in KG)} - \text{Trolley Weight (in KG)}}{\text{Capacity Output} \times \text{Number of Machines Operated}} + \frac{\text{No. of Spindles} \times (\text{No. of Doffing - No. of Empty Bobbin}) \times \text{Weight of single bobbin (in KG)}}{\text{Capacity Output} \times \text{Number of Machines Operated}}$$

Roll Winding

- **Surface Speed (S.S) of Winding Roller (Yards/Min)**

$$\text{R.P.M.} \times \frac{\text{Motor Pulley}}{\text{Machine Pulley}} \times \text{Roller Diameter} \times \frac{\pi}{36}$$

where,

$$\text{R. P. M} \times \frac{\text{Motor Pulley}}{\text{Machine Pulley}} = 1155; \textit{ Roller Diameter} = 3.10 \text{ inches};$$

$$\textit{S.S of winding roller} = \left(\frac{1155 \times 3.10 \times 3.14}{36}\right) = 312.46 \text{ yards/min};$$

- **Production Formula (Kilograms)**

$$\frac{312.16 \times \text{Count} \times 60 \times (\text{Working Hours-Break}) \times \text{No. of Spindles}}{14400 \times 2.2046}$$

where, Break = Prayer + Time lost due to mechanical issue; *Working Hours* = 7.5;

- **Efficiency:**

$$\text{Efficiency} = \frac{\text{Actual Output (per worker, in kilograms)}}{\text{Capacity Output}}$$

Precision Winding

- **Surface Speed (S.S) of Precision Winder (Yards/Min)**

$$\text{R.P.M.} \times \frac{\text{Motor Pulley}}{\text{Machine Pulley}} \times \text{Spool Diameter} \times \frac{\pi}{36}$$

where,

$$\text{Motor R. P. M} \times \frac{\text{Motor Pulley}}{\text{Machine Pulley}} = 450;$$

- **Production Formula (Kilograms)**

$$\frac{450 \times \text{Count} \times 60 \times (\text{Working Hours-Break}) \times \text{Spool Diameter} \times \text{No. of Spool}}{14400 \times 2.2046} \times \frac{\pi}{36}$$

where, Break = Prayer + Time lost due to mechanical issue; *Working Hours* = 7.5; *Spool Diameter* = 10 inches

- **Efficiency:**

$$\text{Efficiency} = \frac{\text{Actual Output (per worker, in kilograms)}}{\text{Capacity Output}}$$

S4A Loom (China Loom)

- **Production Formula (Kilograms)**

$$\frac{\text{Picks per minute} \times 60 \times (\text{Working Hours-Break}) \times \text{Ounce/Yard}}{\text{Shorts} \times 36 \times 16 \times 2.2046}$$

where, *Picks per minute* = 234; *Working Hours* = 7.5 hours[9]; *Ounce/Yard* = 12.41; *Shorts* = 7; Break = Prayer + Time lost due to mechanical issue[10]

- **Machine Capacity (Output at 100% efficiency):**

$$\text{Capacity Output} = \frac{234 \times 60 \times (7.5\text{-}0) \times 12.41}{7 \times 36 \times 16 \times 2.2046} = \textit{147 KG}$$

- **Worker Efficiency:**

$$\text{Efficiency} = \frac{\text{Actual Output (per worker, in kilograms)}}{\text{Capacity Output} \times \text{Number of Machines Operated}}$$

[9] Eight hours shift minus half an hour break for lunch.

[10] If a mechanical problem occurs, workers in Unit 2 needs to wait for the mechanics to arrive and fix the issue. This waiting period affects workers' output as they cannot continue their tasks until the problem is resolved.

Bangla Loom

- **Production Formula (Kilograms)**

$$\frac{\text{Picks per minute} \times 60 \times (\text{Working Hours-Break }) \times \text{Ounce/Yard}}{\text{Shorts} \times 36 \times 16 \times 2.2046}$$

where, *Picks per minute* = 150; *Working Hours* = 7.5; *Ounce/Yard* = 5.77; *Shorts* = 8; Break = Prayer + Time lost due to mechanical issue

- **Machine Capacity (Output at 100% efficiency):**

$$\text{Capacity Output} = \frac{150 \times 60 \times (7.5\text{-}0) \times 5.77}{8 \times 36 \times 16 \times 2.2046} = \textit{38.34 KG}$$

- **Efficiency:**

$$\text{Efficiency} = \frac{\text{Actual Output (per worker, in kilograms)}}{\text{Capacity Output} \times \text{Number of Machines Operated}}$$

Herakle and Hemming

- **Production Formula (Number of Pieces)**

$$(\text{Working Hours-Break}) \times 60 \times \text{Standard production/minute}$$

where, *1 inch* = 2.5 stitches; *Possible stitches in 60 seconds* = 1076; *Standard production rate in Herakle* = 3 pieces/minute; *Standard production rate in Hemming* = 5 pieces/minute

- **Standard Capacity (Output at 100% efficiency):**

$$\text{Capacity Output (Herakle)} = (7.5\text{-}0) \times 60 \times 3 = 1350 \text{ pieces}$$
$$\text{Capacity Output (Hemming)} = (7.5\text{-}0) \times 60 \times 5 = 2250 \text{ pieces}$$

- **Efficiency:**

$$\text{Efficiency [Herakle]} = \frac{\text{Actual Output (per worker, in pieces)}}{1350}$$
$$\text{Efficiency [Hemming]} = \frac{\text{Actual Output (per worker, in pieces)}}{2250}$$