

# Do investments in psychological wellbeing and non-technical skills complement poverty reduction programs? Evidence from Rwanda

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# Motivation and Research Question

- Psychological wellbeing  $\implies$  economic behavior, outcomes (Baranov et al (2020), Ghosal et al (2020), McKelway (2020), Rojas et al (2020), Ross (2020), Riley (2019), Bernard et al (2018), Heller et al (2017), among others).
- Psychologically motivated interventions may complement “traditional” anti-poverty programs (Sulaiman (2016), Banerjee et al (2015), among others).

## Research question

Does (1) a workshop designed to promote a sense of agency, (2) a training on non-technical professional skills, or (3) cash lead to the highest psychosocial and economic gains for women in Rwanda **when delivered on top of an existing development intervention?**

# Context

## Resonate

- Developed both workshops.
- 7+ years delivering both workshops to women and girls throughout East Africa.
- Model: complement/enhance partners' programs.

## CARE International Rwanda

- Implement a wide range of programs.
- Participants in this study: financial literacy, development of women's savings cooperatives, training around GBV prevention and response.
  - All come from lowest 2 socio-economic categories in Rwanda.
  - Ages 23-75 (median = 40)
  - 88% primarily work on family farm, others engage in casual labor, shopkeeping.

# Storytelling for Leadership

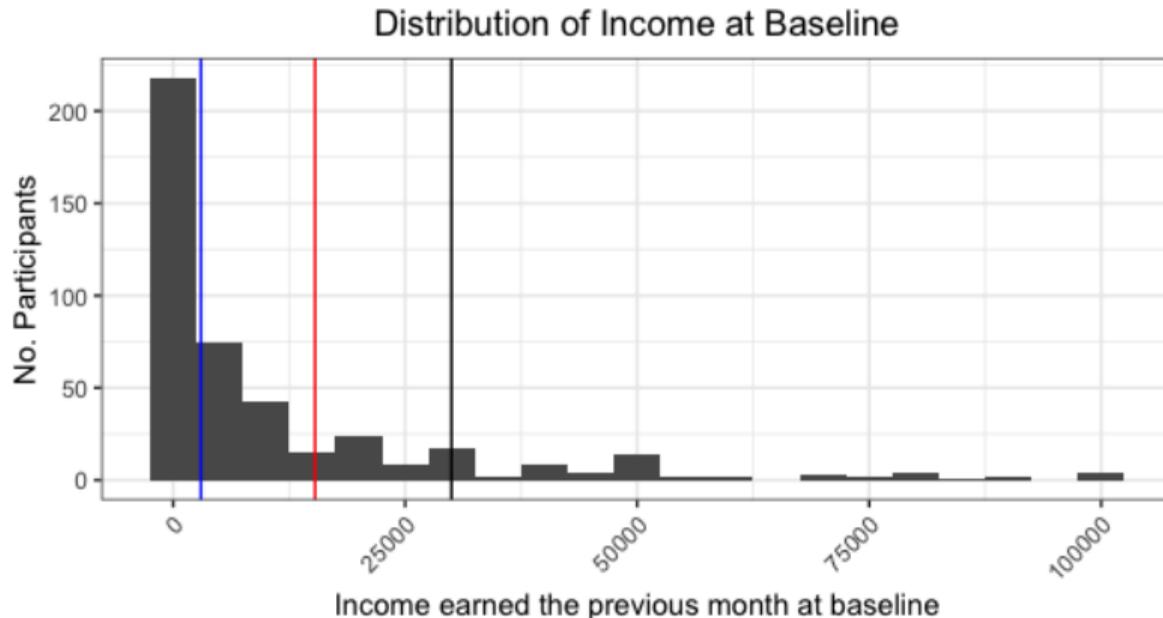
- 2-day workshop.
- Define leadership broadly: “being proactive in the face of a challenge.”
- Participants identify their values.
- Develop and share a story about a time when their actions reflected those values.
- Build a sense of agency rooted in past achievements/actions.

# Professional Development

- 2-day workshop.
- Effective communication/public speaking.
- Networking.
- Goal setting (SMART goals).
- Seeking out opportunities.

# Cash benchmark

- Per-participant cost of both workshops is  $\approx$  \$35 (32,000 FRW).
  - Double mean monthly income for individual participants at baseline, but much smaller than large-scale cash transfer programs.



# Timeline and implementation

## Timeline

- Aug. - Sep. 2019: baseline survey.
- Sep. - Oct. 2019: workshops (6 total, always with the same facilitator).
- Oct. 2019: Cash transfer.
- Nov. 2020: endline survey.

# Timeline and implementation

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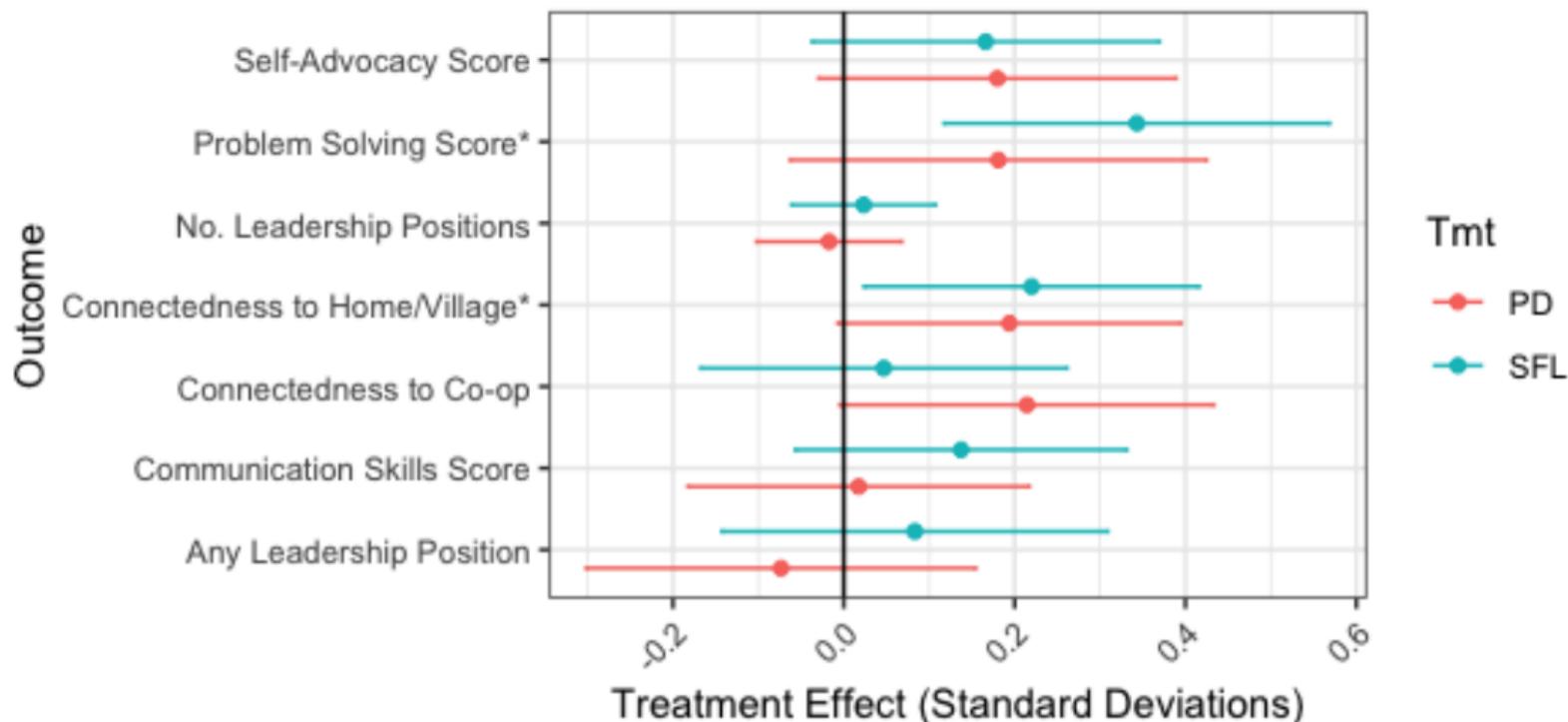
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## Pre-registered families of outcomes

- Primary psychosocial: outcomes predicted to be most closely linked to workshop content.
- Secondary psychosocial outcomes: outcomes that may be indirectly linked to workshop content.
- Economic outcomes: marginal utility of expenditure, income, earning any income.

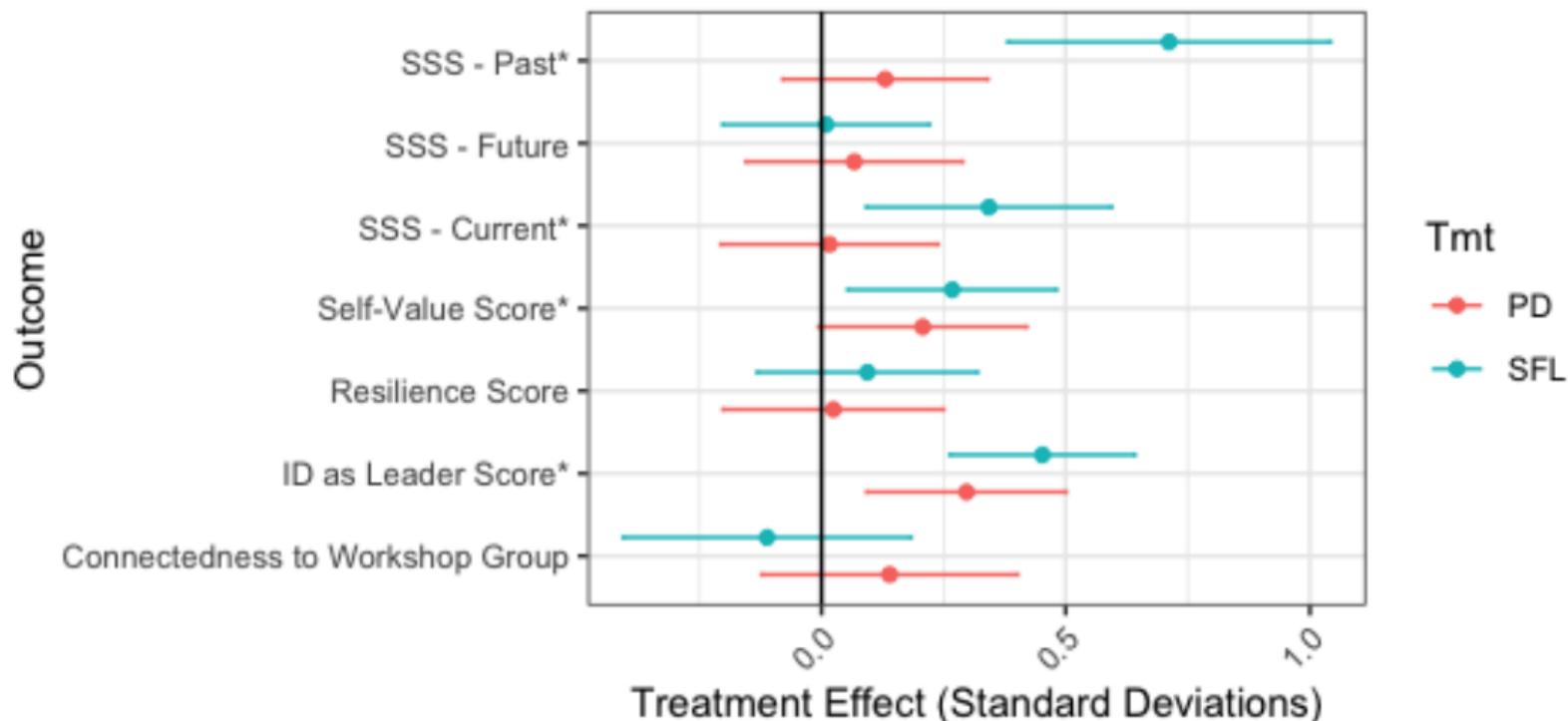
# Primary psychosocial outcomes

## Treatment Effects on Primary Psycho-Social Outcomes

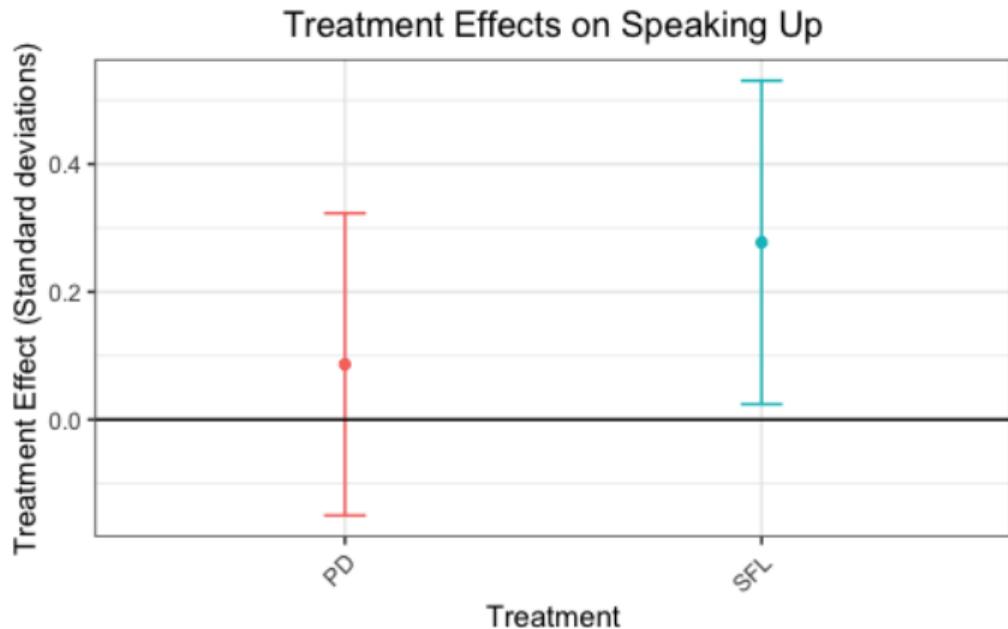


# Secondary psychosocial outcomes

## Treatment Effects on Secondary Psycho-Social Outcomes



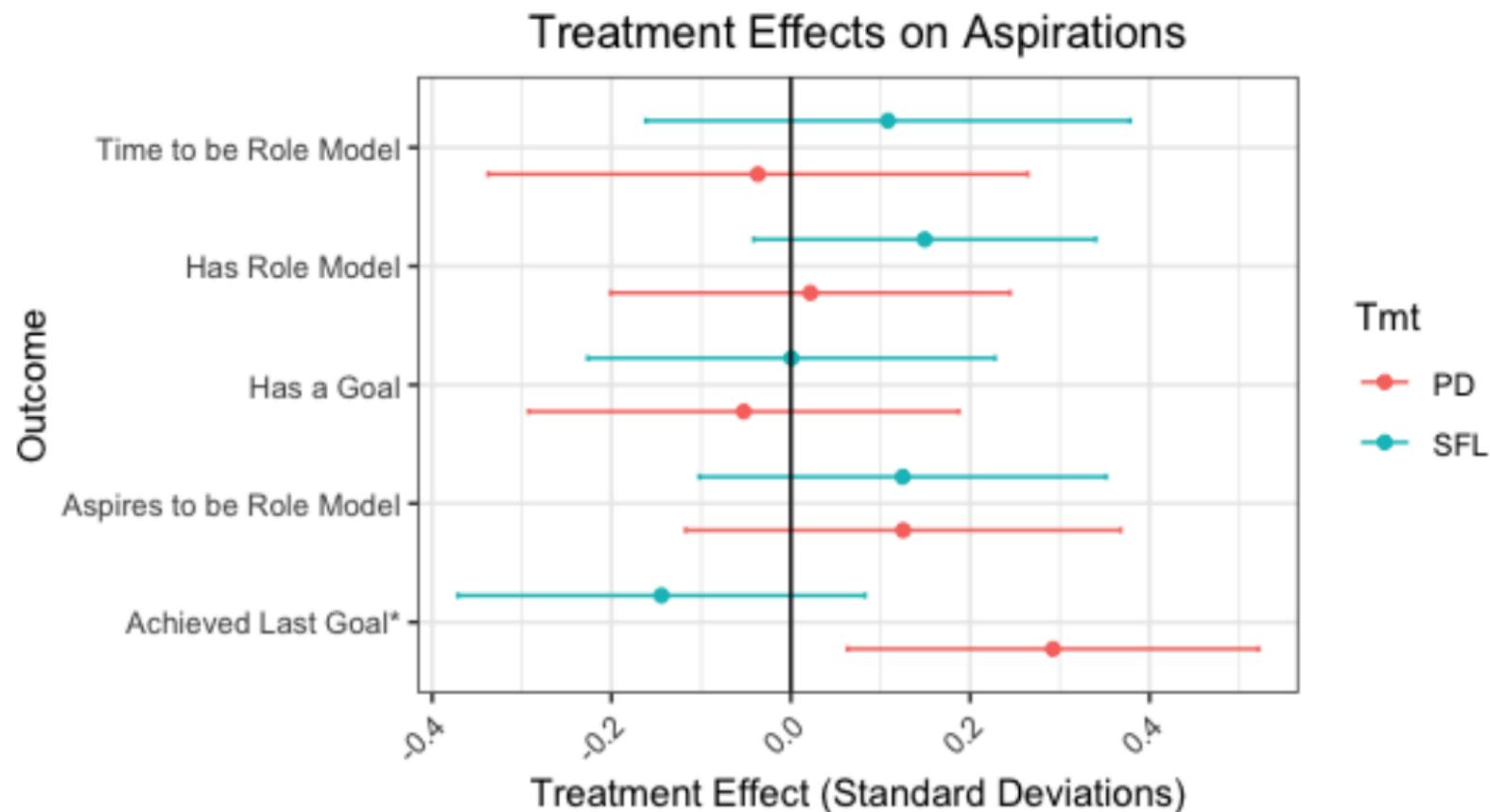
# Are there effects on peer leadership?



9pp more likely to report speaking up. Where?

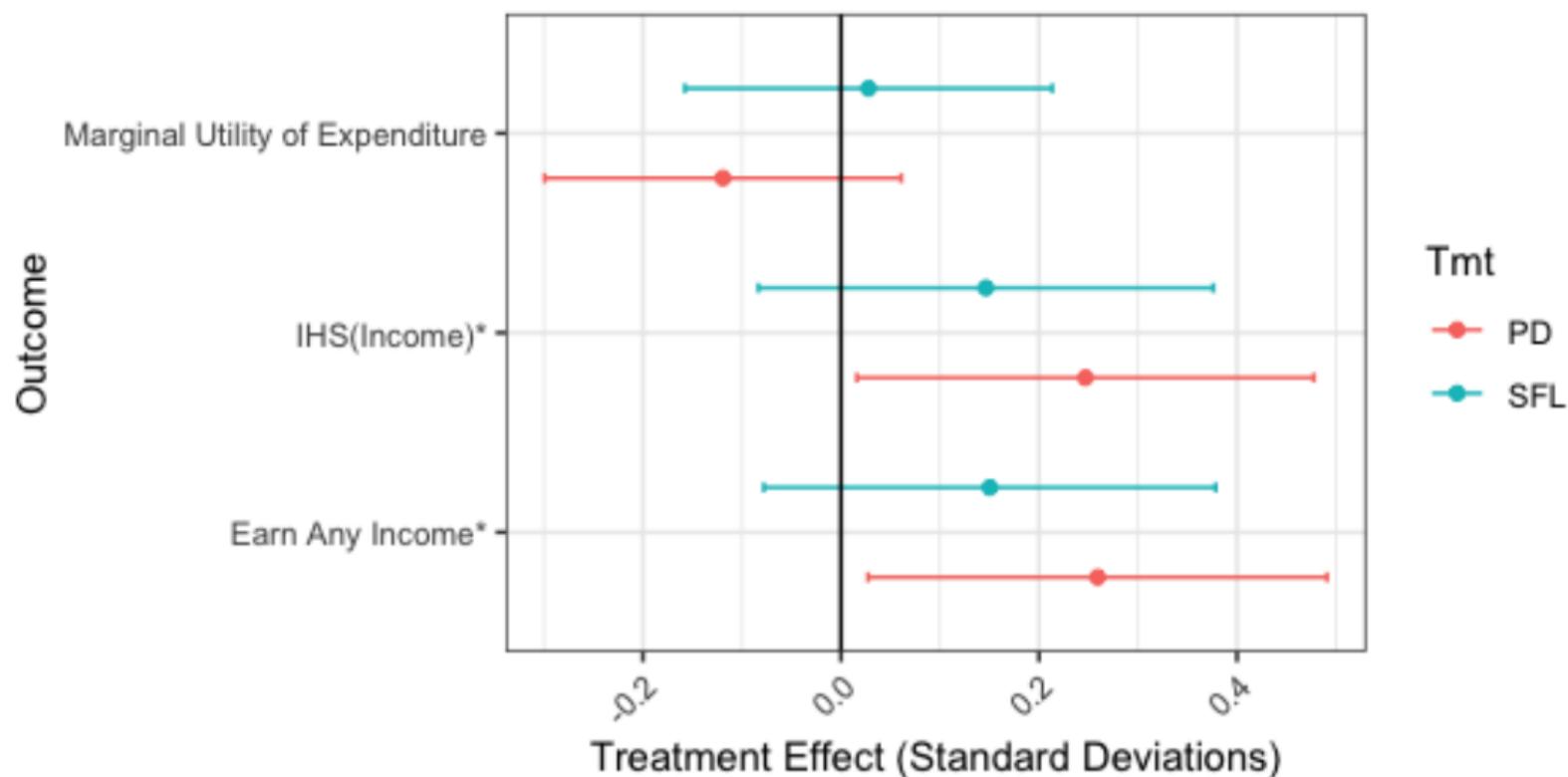
- In markets: sensitization/enforcement of COVID regulations.
- Family/neighbor dispute resolution meetings.
- In co-ops when new members arrive.

## Secondary psychosocial outcomes (aspirations)



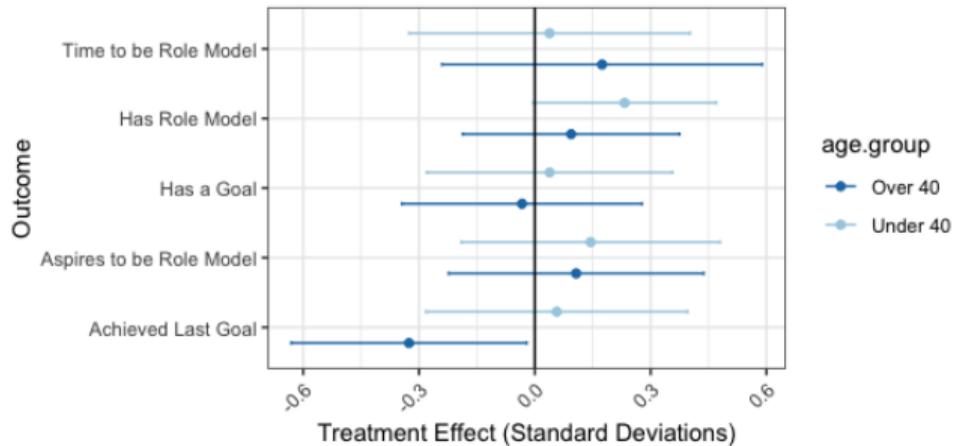
# Economic outcomes

## Treatment Effects on Economic Outcomes

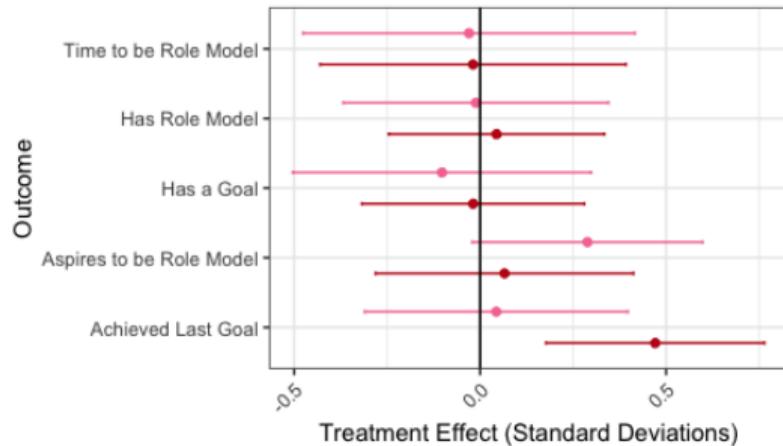


# Heterogeneity by age - achieving goal

### Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Aspirations - SFL

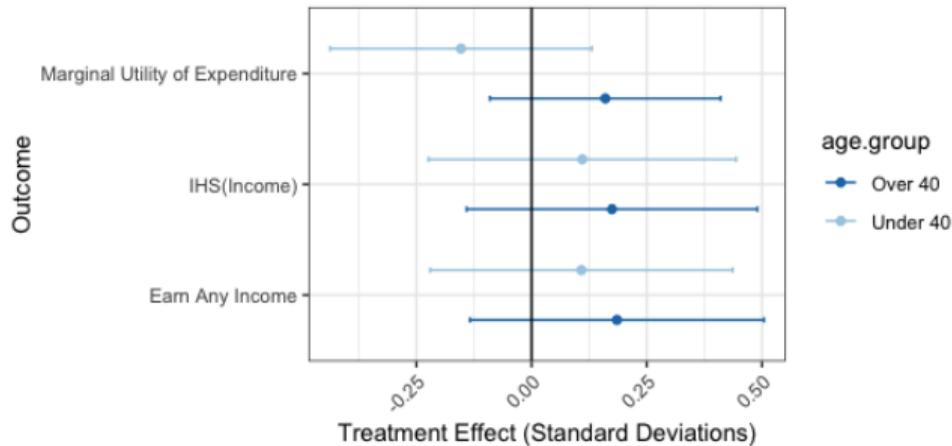


### Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Aspirations - PD

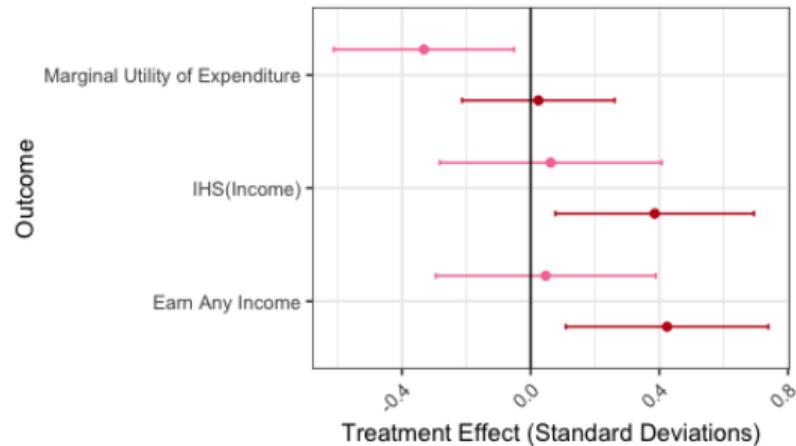


# Heterogeneity by age - economic outcomes

## Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Economic Outcomes - SFL



## Heterogeneous Treatment Effects on Economic Outcomes - PD



# Discussion

- 1 Storytelling for Leadership effectively improves a range of psychosocial outcomes relative to cash, but has little impact on achieving goals and economic outcomes.
  - Suggestive evidence that impacts are larger for younger women.
- 2 Professional Development has little impact on psychosocial outcomes relative to cash but improves economic outcomes, increases likelihood of achieving goals.
  - Suggestive evidence that impacts are larger for older women.
- 3 Implications
  - Targeting: older, higher status women may benefit most from Professional Development.
  - If younger women face internal constraints, may benefit from combined intervention.
  - **Caveat:** COVID lockdown may have increased external barriers disproportionately for younger women.

Thank you!  
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