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Saving by default: Evidence from a field experiment in rural India

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Saving by Default: Evidence from a Field Experiment in India

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Saving by Default: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Rural India

Vincent Somville* and Lore Vandewalle†

March 19, 2015

Abstract

A growing share of the world population is getting access to a formal bank account. This allows a move from cash to account based payments. Grounding our hypothesis in behavioral economics, we conjecture that being paid on an account instead of in cash can play a major role in encouraging savings. When paid on the account, the money is saved *by default*, while - as long as payments are done in cash - the money is ready to be spent. We test our hypothesis in rural India, with villagers who either had an account, or were asked to open one. They received weekly payments of Rs 150 for about 10 consecutive weeks. We randomly allocated them to being paid on the account (treated) or in cash (control). We find that the treatment increases the account balance by about 110 percent, and that the effect is long lasting. The control villagers do not save more in other assets, but increase their expenditures on regular consumption items. We exclude two alternative mechanisms that could explain the result. First, using lab in the field games, we show that the treatment does not enhance the trust in or empathy towards the banker. Second, we provide evidence against the treated having developed an active savings habit on the account: they behave like the control, when we switch from account to cash payments.

JEL Classification: D14, C93, D03, G21, O16

Keywords: Savings, Finance, Behavioral Economics, Default, India

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1 Introduction

With the development of banking services based on mobile networks, the share of people with access to a formal bank account increases rapidly. In India, the government has made it a priority to provide a bank account to all the households in the country. The next step is to pay public transfers directly on the recipient's bank account, instead of in cash.

We hypothesize that savings behavior will change once people receive income on a bank account, especially in an economy where most transactions are handled in cash. When paid on the account, the money is saved *by default*, while - as long as payments are done in cash - the money is ready to be spent. We set-up a randomized control trial to assess whether the default option can induce larger savings. We sampled 442 villagers in three different districts of Chhattisgarh, a Central-Eastern state of India. All of them either had an account, or were asked to open one. They received weekly payments of Rs 150, at the end of a survey that we conducted for about 10 consecutive weeks. The only difference was the method of payment: we randomly allocated them to being paid on the account (treated) or in cash (control). The villagers are free to deposit or withdraw the amount they want, the transaction costs are negligible, and the bank is located at their doorstep. The only cost is the couple of minutes it takes to perform a transaction. Therefore, if the individuals behave like standard economic agents, we should not observe any difference in the savings behavior of the treated as compared to the control. However, we know from the literature about the default option that even small transaction costs may have big impacts on human behaviour (O'Donoghue and Rabin, 1999a).

Our main findings are as follows. First, being paid on the account instead of in cash increases the account balance by around 110 percent (or almost Rs 420) after 3 months of weekly payments. Second, the effects are long lasting: five months after the last weekly payment, the balance of the treated is still twice the one

of the control. Finally, the villagers that were paid in cash do not save more in other assets, such as cash at home. However, they increase expenditures on regular consumption, such as rice, vegetables, fuels, and soap with about Rs 402. The increase in consumption expenditures by villagers paid in cash, is remarkably similar to the increase in the savings of the villagers paid on the account. Therefore, we conclude that the treatment has a net positive impact on the respondent's total savings.

We interpret these findings as the outcome of the default option. However, we also formally test and reject two alternative mechanisms. First, treated villagers are more likely to interact with the local bankers, which could affect their trust and therefore their willingness to keep a higher balance on the account. To test whether this is the case, we played lab-in-the-field trust and dictator games shortly after the last weekly payment. We do not find any evidence that the treatment affects the trust and the empathy towards the local banker, as the treated and control behave similarly in the lab.

Second, individuals who are paid on their account on a regular basis might develop the habit to save on that account. If this is the case, changing from account to cash payments should not hinder a further increase in the balance. To test this hypothesis, we twist the original design. About seven weeks after we finished the first series of surveys, we repeated the interviews for another four weeks during which we paid everyone in cash. We explicitly told them that the use of the accounts is the same, but that they have to deposit themselves the amount that they want to save on the account. The change in the balance is the same for both groups during these four weeks. The account balance of the treated remains twice the one of the control, but that difference has been created while the treated were paid on their account.

Our paper contributes to different strands of literature. First, as micro-credit showed its limitations, savings gained importance. It is now widely acknowledged

that there is a substantial demand for savings among the poor, but that they face important barriers. Some recent papers investigate the impact of providing formal bank accounts to the poor. Those papers show large take-up rates (among others, Ashraf et al., 2006, 2010; Dupas and Robinson, 2013a,b). However, a striking pattern is the low usage of those accounts. For instance, Dupas and Robinson (2013a) offered bank accounts to Kenyan micro-entrepreneurs. While 87% took-up the account, only 41% made at least one transaction within the first six months. In a similar experiment, Dupas et al. (2012) find a 62% take-up rate, but a 18% usage rate, even when leniently defining active usage as making at least two deposits a year. Karlan et al. (2014) emphasize that the gap between take-up and usage of formal bank accounts remains to be explained. Our paper shows that the gap can be reduced by moving from cash to account based payments.

Second, our research is embedded into the recent financial inclusion policies in India. The debate about providing access to formal banking for all, and the move towards account-based public transfers is ongoing. While the political debate and scientific research focus on public administration issues (Muralidharan et al., 2014), we draw attention to the potential impact on the recipient's finances. The shift to account based payments is not only taking place in India, but is on the political agenda in a wide range of countries. One famous example is Brazil, where almost twenty percent of the beneficiaries of the Bolsa Familia program receive their transfers on a bank account.[1]

Third, our work contributes to the literature focusing on the importance of behavioral biases in explaining savings behavior (Thaler and Shefrin, 1981; Shefrin and Thaler, 1988; Akerlof, 1991; Thaler, 1994; Bernheim, 1997; Laibson et al., 1998; O'Donoghue and Rabin, 1999a,b; Lusardi, 1999). According to the canonical models of decision-making, individuals select their most preferred alternative in accordance with well-defined preferences. The decision is not influenced by the status quo

[1]Numbers obtained from the *Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social* in January 2015.

alternative or default option, i.e. the decision that is taken when people do not make an active choice. However, individuals tend to stick to the default option more frequently than the canonical model would predict, which leads to a *status quo bias*. Samuelson and Zeckhauser (1988) provide different explanations for the tendency to follow the default option. First, affinity for the status quo alternative is consistent with rational decision making in the presence of transition costs or uncertainty. This occurs when switching away from the default is sufficiently costly, or when the benefits are uncertain. Second, it can be seen as the consequence of cognitive misconceptions or psychological commitments. For example, loss-averse individuals weigh the potential losses from changing the default larger than the potential gains (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; Thaler, 1980; Kahneman and Tversky, 1984).[2] We can rule out both explanations because of our experimental setting. Before we started the weekly payments, we organized a practical information session for all the participants in the study. We showed them how to deposit and withdraw money, and demonstrated how a fingerprint recognition tool protects their money. Therefore, the villagers were well informed about the safety of the accounts, and the negligibility of the transaction costs. Procrastination provides an alternative explanation for the status quo bias. Postponing tasks leads to an inertia that can explain the endurance of the default option. For example, Madrian and Shea (2001) use it as an explanation for the observed default behavior in 401(k) savings plans in the United States of America. The authors compare the savings of employees whose default option was either being opted in or being opted out of the savings plan. They find that both the participation, and the savings rates are significantly higher under the automatic enrollment option.[3]

People's inertia makes it possible to use the default option as an effective tool

[2]Other explanations include *anchoring*, *regret avoidance*, and *framing effects* (Samuelson and Zeckhauser, 1988).

[3]The importance of the default in the 401(k) plan has been further studied by Choi et al. (2002, 2004), and Carroll et al. (2009). Atkinson et al. (2013) provide similar evidence from loan takers in Guatemala.

to positively affect people's behavior. Well-known examples include the expression of end-of-life treatment preferences (Kressel and Chapman, 2007), car insurance plan choices (Johnson et al., 1993), car option purchases (C. Whan Park, 2000), organ donation decisions (Johnson and Goldstein, 2003; Abadie and Gay, 2006), the consent to receive e-mails (Johnson et al., 2002), and the enrollment to savings plans (Madrian and Shea, 2001). Our paper adds to this literature in a very different setting. We show that changing the default payment method is an effective tool to enhance the rural poor's savings.

Finally, from a methodological point of view, two features of our study must be emphasized. First, our main outcome variables are constructed using bank records, which prevents us from misreporting errors. Second, in contrast to most of the existing literature, we do not only measure the impact on savings in one asset, but we use financial diaries to provide a complete picture, including the impact on the respondents' consumption and savings in other assets.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we provide more details on the context of the study and India's financial inclusion plan, on our experimental design, and the data. In Section 3 we present the main results, the long-term impact and heterogeneity effects, and in Section 4 we discuss the impact on consumption and total savings. We discuss alternative mechanisms in Section 5 and conclude in Section 6.

2 Background, Experimental Design and Data Collection

In this section, we first discuss India's business correspondents model and financial inclusion plans. Next, we describe our experimental design and the data used in our analysis.

2.1 Financial Inclusion in India

In the previous decade, Bank account penetration in India was estimated at 35 percent, with disparities along income and gender lines: only 21 percent of adults in the poorest income quintile, and 26 percent of women report having an account (Demirguc-Kunt and Klapper, 2012). To achieve greater financial inclusion, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced the Business Correspondents Model in 2006. The model, which is based on recommendations of the 2004 Khan Commission for financial inclusion, allows banks to appoint Business Correspondents (BCs) as intermediaries in providing financial and banking services on their behalf. Initially, the entities permitted to act as BCs were restricted to NGOs/MFIs set up under Societies/Trust Acts, Societies registered under Mutually Aided Cooperative Societies or the Cooperative Societies Acts of States, section 25 companies, and registered Non Banking Financial Companies (RBI, 2006). However, the RBI gradually widened the list of eligible entities, as to provide more flexibility to banks (among others, RBI, 2008b; RBI, 2009; RBI, 2010). In a notification sent out in August 2008, the RBI allowed BCs to hire *BCSAs* or Business Correspondents Sub-Agents, i.e. grass-root level entities who can render the services of the BCs (RBI, 2008a).

In the region where we conducted our survey, Axis bank appointed the NGO Basix Sub-K as a BC. Basix Sub-K, which is our main partner, is one of the pioneers in the BC model and already reaches 980 000 people. Its main responsibilities are selecting one grocery shop owner per village to become the BCSA, training the new local banker, and providing the necessary equipment: a mobile phone, a finger print recognition device and a receipt machine that are interconnected through bluetooth. Basix Sub-K also pays the BCSA, helps wherever needed and provides a customer service for the clients. The first task of the BCSA is to help villagers opening a simple savings account. The procedure is as follows. First, the BCSA has to send the customer's filled-in application form and a photo to Axis bank. Next, the bank opens the account and communicates the unique bank account number to

the BCSA. Finally, the BCSA activates the account by registering the finger prints of the customer. Once this procedure is finalised, the customer can perform standard transactions on the account: deposits, withdrawals, money transfers, balance inquiries, and in some cases receiving government transfers. Balance inquiries and transactions that lead to a reduction of the balance require a signature through the finger print recognition device. The customer is charged an enrollment fee of Rs 25 when the account is used for the first time. Deposits are free, and so are withdrawals if the average quarterly balance (AQB) is above Rs 500. However, customers are charged Rs 2 per withdrawal if the AQB is less than Rs 200, and Rs 1 per withdrawal if the AQB is between Rs 200 and Rs 500.

On the 15th of August 2014, the Modi Government announced the *Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana* financial inclusion plans. Ever since, bank account penetration has increased at an amazing speed. The latest figures show that 99 percent of the households have opened a bank account. However, 67.3% of the accounts are dormant.[4]

2.2 Experimental Design

The experiment was conducted in Chhattisgarh, an east-central state of India. We selected 18 villages in collaboration with Basix Sub-K according to two criteria. First, we excluded villages with a cooperative, rural or commercial bank branch, as to be sure that the BCSA was the only person providing formal banking services at the doorstep. Second, we opted for clusters of villages that are sufficiently close to one another, as the survey team had to travel between them within a reasonable amount of time. The selected villages are located in three bordering districts: five in the Magarload block of the district Dhamtari, seven in the Rajim block of the district Gariyabandh, and six in the Abhanpur block of the district Raipur. These villages are close, but not contiguous, as can be seen from Figure 5 in Appendix A.

[4]The statistics are available on the official *Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana* website: www.pmjdy.gov.in.

The average distance between the BCSAs is 20.5 km.

We randomly sampled 26 participants in each village. The BCSA's customer list was used to select 14 villagers who already had a BCSA account, and the voter list to sample 12 villagers without a BCSA account. Each person on the customer and the voter list was allocated a number. The sequence in which the villagers were approached respected the ascending order of those numbers. To be sampled, a villager should (i) be the head of the household or the head's spouse, (ii) not plan to leave the village, and (iii) belong to a household in which nobody has a savings account with another institution[5].

In the fall of 2013, trained enumerators visited the sampled participants at home to administer a baseline survey. At the end of the interview, the respondents without a BCSA account were encouraged to open one. Basix Sub-k took care of the paperwork and the associated costs. All the participants who were offered an account with the help of Basix Sub-K opened one. We organized a practical information session for all the participants in the study. We showed them how to deposit and withdraw money, and demonstrated the importance of the fingerprint recognition tool to protect their account.

From February till May 2014, we hired a centrally located room in each village, where we interviewed the participants on a weekly basis for a total of 7 to 13 weeks.[6] We gathered detailed information on the evolution of the household composition and on the various earnings and expenditures of the household members over the past 7 days. Because the villagers had to leave their house to be interviewed, and because the surveys were time consuming, they received Rs 150 at the end of each interview, which is close to the salary of MGNREGA wage labor.[7] We randomized the way

[5]We allowed for post office or other accounts that were opened to receive payments from welfare schemes, or MGNREGA. We also allowed for cooperative accounts that were used for the payment of paddy or other grains only.

[6]We delayed the weekly interviews in some villages because (i) we wanted to follow-up and re-train the enumerators as closely as possible in the first couple of weeks, and (ii) it took longer than expected to open the bank accounts in a subset of villages.

[7]When we started the weekly interviews, the MGNREGA salary was Rs 146 per day. In March

this weekly compensation was paid. Half the respondents received Rs 150 directly on their account (treated), while the other half received it in cash (control). The intervention and randomization are summarized in Figure 1.

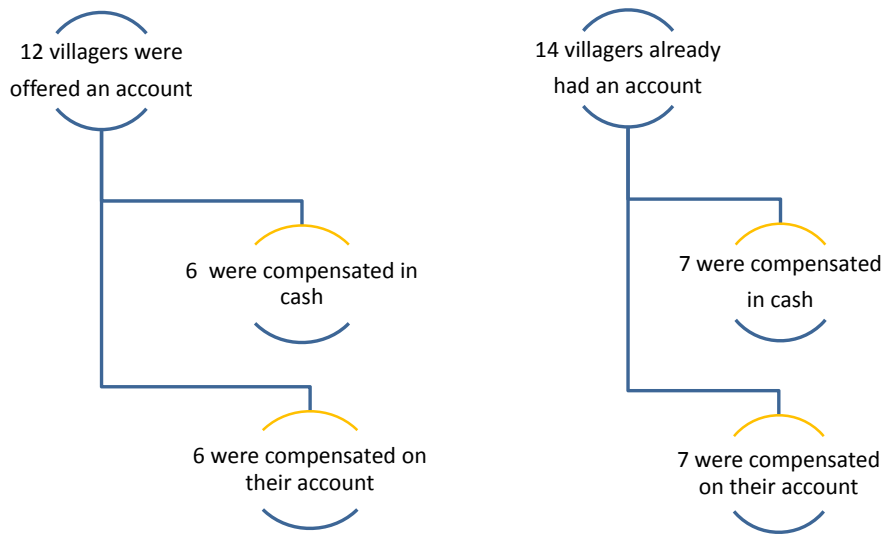

Figure 1: Sampling Strategy

To guarantee a desired heterogeneity analysis in terms of gender, we stratified the sample. The groups with 6 villagers consist of 3 men and 3 women. To accomplish the same for villagers who already had an account, we sampled 8 men and 6 women in 9 randomly chosen villages, and 6 men and 8 women in the other 9 villages. Half the men and women were paid on their account, the other half in cash.

2.3 Data and Pre-Analysis Plan

We use three sources of data. First, our baseline survey included questions on characteristics of the participants and their household members, such as education, marital status, occupation, land ownership, and membership of savings groups. It included a detailed asset module, as well as information on the household's income, production, expenditures, investments, transfers, loans, and informal savings. We

2014, it increased to Rs 157 per day.

also gathered detailed information on decision making responsibilities within the household, personality traits, time and risk preferences, and trust in various institutions.

Second, Basix Sub-K provided the data on the BCSA accounts. The data contain information on the deposits, withdrawals, and transfers made or received by the respondents. They provide the information needed to construct our main dependent variables of interest.

Finally, data were gathered through weekly household surveys. During these, we up-dated the baseline survey on a weekly basis. The weekly interviews also provided an opportunity to compensate the villagers differently: in cash or on their accounts.

Before we received the data, we registered a pre-analysis plan with the American Economic Association's registry for randomized control trials. The plan has ID AEARCTR-0000387. To further enrich the paper, we also present data and analyses that were not pre-specified. Appendix B categorizes our results depending on whether they were foreseen in our pre-analysis plan or not.

2.4 Attrition

Shortly after the baseline survey, one shop keeper stopped his BCSA activity because it was not as profitable as his other business. His decision was unrelated to our study and the attrition should be orthogonal to the experimental treatment assignment. We document attrition in Table 1. The final sample available for the analysis consists of 442 participants.

2.5 Baseline Characteristics and Balance Check

The baseline survey was administered at the households' homes between October 2013 and January 2014. Table 2 presents the final sample's baseline characteristics. The sample consists of 442 respondents. The first column provides the sample mean and the standard deviation for a series of characteristics. To test for balance across

Table 1: Attrition

	Had an account		**Opened an account**	
	Paid cash (1)	Paid on account (2)	Paid cash (3)	Paid on account (4)
Number of people in the sample				
... at baseline	126	126	108	108
... after losing one BCSA	119	119	102	102

groups, the second column presents the coefficient estimates (and standard errors) of the difference between the baseline means in the treatment and control groups. All of the 22 coefficient estimates are small and none of them is significantly different from zero, suggesting that the randomization was successful at making the treatment orthogonal to observed baseline characteristics.

Since we stratified the sample on gender, half of the respondents are women. In terms of demographic characteristics, respondents are mainly Other Backward Castes (OBC)[8], and less than half of them are literate. A great majority is married, and employed in agriculture (the omitted category is being unemployed). On average, respondents hold one other account with either a post office, cooperative, rural bank or formal bank. These accounts were opened to receive payments of welfare schemes, MGNREGA, paddy or other grains (see Section 2.2). One out of five participants belongs to a neighborhood or Self-Help Group. Most respondents are involved in the household's decision about where and how much to save, and they trust both the BCSA and banks.[9] In terms of time preferences, 42% of the participants are impatient, i.e. they prefer money today instead of a larger amount in one week. The sample is quite poor. They own about one acre of land on aver-

[8]Castes are classified in the following categories: ST (Scheduled Tribe), SC (Scheduled Caste), OBC (Other Backward Caste), and FC (Forward Caste).

[9]The respondents were asked whether they trust the BCSA and banks. We build a trust index equal to one if the answer to both questions is "quite a bit of trust" or "a lot of trust". Otherwise, the index is equal to zero.

Table 2: Summary Statistics and Balance Check of Baseline Characteristics

	Mean (Std. dev.) (1)	Coefficient on *Paid on account* (Std. errors) (2)
Paid on account (%)	50.00	
	(50.06)	
New account (%)	46.15	-0.00
	(49.91)	(0.05)
Woman (%)	49.77	0.00
	(50.06)	(0.05)
Caste category: ST (%)	12.67	0.02
	(33.30)	(0.03)
Caste category: SC (%)	12.22	-0.02
	(32.79)	(0.03)
Caste category: OBC (%)	74.43	-0.00
	(43.67)	(0.04)
Caste category: FC (%)	0.68	0.00
	(8.22)	(0.01)
Married (%)	88.24	0.01
	(32.26)	(0.03)
Literate (%)	48.19	0.00
	(50.02)	(0.05)
Land (acres)	1.17	-0.05
	(1.74)	(0.17)
Age	43.00	0.43
	(12.61)	(1.20)
Wage labor in agriculture (%)	29.19	0.00
	(45.51)	(0.04)
Wage labor outside agriculture (%)	13.80	0.01
	(34.53)	(0.03)
Self-employed in agriculture (%)	45.48	-0.01
	(49.85)	(0.05)
Self-employed outside agriculture (%)	4.07	-0.01
	(19.79)	(0.02)
Dwelling type: katcha (%)	52.49	0.01
	(49.99)	(0.05)
Accounts held (#)	1.17	0.01
	(0.60)	(0.06)
Savings groups (#)	0.17	-0.00
	(0.38)	(0.04)
Impatient (%)	42.08	0.04
	(49.42)	(0.05)
Takes savings decision at home (%)	84.84	0.02
	(35.90)	(0.03)
Trusts the BCSA and banks (%)	73.30	0.03
	(44.29)	(0.04)
Distance to the BCSA (km)	0.29	-0.03
	(0.22)	(0.02)
Balance on BCSA account before start weekly surveys (Rs)	116.56	14.77
	(712.63)	(67.87)
Weeks interviewed (#)	9.73	-0.44
	(3.05)	(0.29)
Observations	442	442

The first column reports means (and standard deviations), and the second column shows the coefficient estimates (and standard errors) of the difference between the means in the treatment and control groups. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent

age, and 52% have a house made of mud (katcha). The average distance from the house to the BCSA is about 290 meter in crow flies. The last two variables are not included in the regressions, but provide some important information: the money on the BCSA account was balanced shortly before we started the weekly interviews, and so is the average number of weeks the respondents joined the weekly interviews. On average the respondents were interviewed ten times.

3 Experimental Results

In this Section, we discuss the main results of our experiment, the long-term impact and heterogeneous effects. The average respondent was paid for ten interviews (Table 2). As we do not have perfect compliance, we interpret the results as intention-to-treat estimates.

3.1 Impact

We first provide summary statistics on the balance the day after we conducted the last weekly interview in the village. Table 3 shows that the treatment has an important effect on the mean balance itself, and on the share of people having a positive balance.

Table 3: Final Account Balance, by Treatment Status

	Full sample (Std. dev.) (1)	Paid cash (Std. dev.) (2)	Paid on account (Std. dev.) (3)
Final balance (Rs)	595.61	378.00	813.22
	(1023.19)	(1011.36)	(990.24)
Final balance is positive (%)	84.16	70.14	98.19
	(36.55)	(45.87)	(13.36)
Observations	442	221	221

Next, we estimate the impact of being paid on the account, by running the

following regression:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_{ij} + \beta_2 X_{ij} + V_j + \epsilon_{ij} \tag{1}$$

where Y_{ij} is a measure of the savings kept on the account of individual i in village j, T_{ij} is a dummy indicating the respondent was paid on the account, and X_{ij} is a vector of baseline characteristics which includes all but the last two variables that were presented in Table 2. We estimate equation 1 both with and without these individual controls. V_j are village fixed effects that control for differences in time-invariant unobservables across villages, and ϵ_{ij} is the error term.

We use the account's data that we received from Basix Sub-K to construct three different measures of savings: (i) the *final balance* is the respondent's balance the day after we conducted the last weekly interview in the village, (ii) the *average balance* is the average account balance from the day after the first till the day after the last weekly interview in the village; and finally we use the same interval to create the variable (iii) *positive balance*, which is the ratio between the number of days with a positive balance and the total number of days in that interval.[10]

The main results are shown in Table 4. Columns 1 and 2 present the results for the final balance, columns 3 and 4 for the average balance and columns 5 and 6 for the proportion of days with a positive balance. Regressions without controls are provided in the odd numbered columns and those with controls in the even numbered columns.[11]

Being paid on the account has significant positive effects on the different measures of savings on the account. Compared to the control mean, the effects are extremely large: the final balance increases by 111-115 percent, the average balance by 85-90 percent, and the proportion of days with a positive balance by 47-48 percent.

[10] When constructing the different measures of savings, we use the balance one day after the last interview, as to allow villagers paid on the account to withdraw, and villagers paid in cash to deposit. Otherwise, the difference between treated and control would be artificially inflated.

[11] The coefficients of the control variables are available upon request.

Table 4: Impact of Being Paid on the Account on Savings

	Final Balance		Average Balance		Positive Balance	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Paid on account	435.23***	419.14***	269.93***	253.14***	0.29***	0.28***
	(63.66)	(75.40)	(34.24)	(43.23)	(0.04)	(0.03)
New account		-213.20		-219.48*		-0.19***
		(134.84)		(132.74)		(0.04)
Woman		66.86		-5.22		0.06*
		(93.16)		(92.32)		(0.03)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	442	442	442	442	442	442
R^2	0.06	0.10	0.03	0.08	0.18	0.32
Mean dependent (control)	378.0	378.0	299.2	299.2	0.60	0.60

In the columns 1-2 the dependent variable is the respondent's balance on the BCSA account the day after we conducted the last weekly interview in the village, in the columns 3-4 it is the average account balance from the day after the first till the day after the last weekly interview in the village; and in the columns 5-6 the proportion of days with a positive balance in that period. Baseline characteristics in the columns 2, 4 and 6 include the respondent's caste category, marital status, literacy, land owned, age, occupation, dwelling type, accounts held, membership of savings groups, and distance to the BCSA. It also includes dummies indicating whether the respondent is impatient, takes savings decisions in the household, and trusts both the BCSA and banks. All columns include village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

Finally, the impact is graphically presented in the Figures 2 and 3. In Figure 2, the horizontal axis shows the number of weeks since the start of the experiment, and the vertical axis the balance on the BCSA account. The balance of the respondents who are paid on the account first-order stochastically dominates the balance of the respondents who are paid in cash. The stable balance of those who did not participate in our study (*Other villagers*) suggests the absence of any particular event that would affect people's savings in those villages during the experiment.

Figure 3 pictures the distribution of the final balances. The treated respondents are much less likely to have a zero balance, and both their mean and median balances are higher.

3.2 Long-Term Impact

To examine the treatment effect in the longer run, we estimate equation 1, where Y_{ij} is the balance on the account 15, 19 and 23 weeks after the last interview. Table

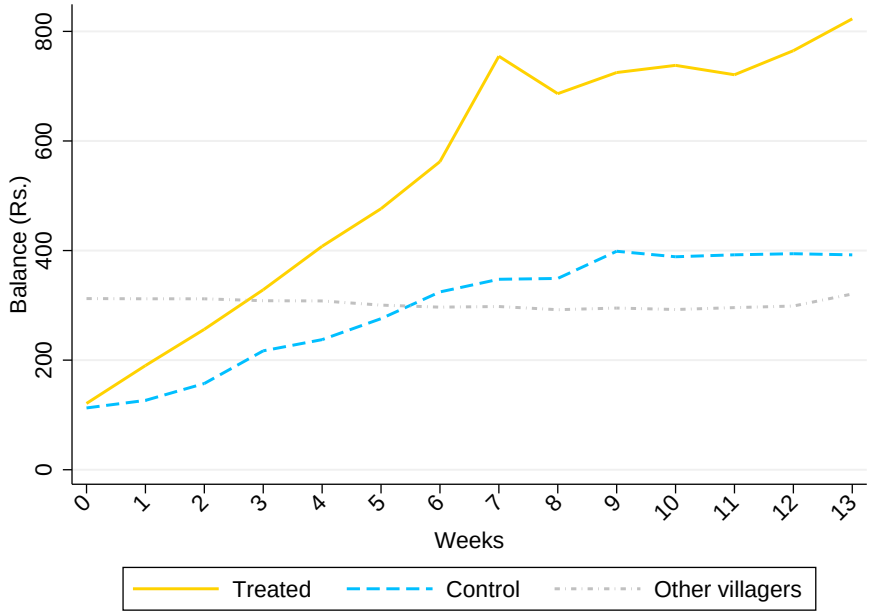

Figure 2: Balance on the BCSA Account

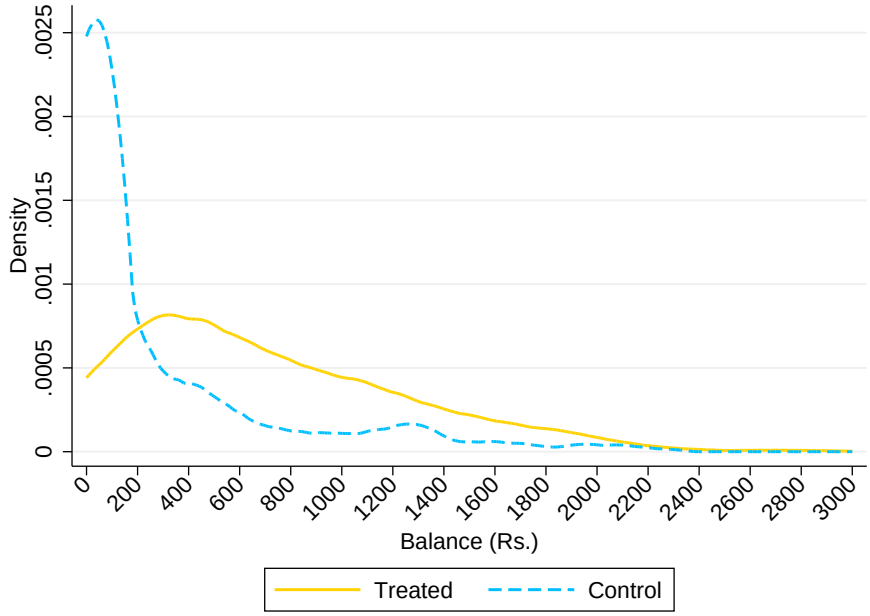

Figure 3: Distribution of the Final Balance

4 showed that the treatment increased the balance by 111-115 percent. From Table 5, we learn that 15, 19 and 23 weeks later, the differences in the account balance between the treated and control are still similar.

Table 5: Treatment Effect in the Longer-Run

	After 15 weeks		After 19 weeks		After 23 weeks	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Paid on account	324.48***	318.57***	303.38***	290.82***	215.52***	204.57***
	(71.10)	(71.00)	(64.44)	(69.72)	(75.62)	(76.76)
New account		-175.65		-184.76		-91.92
		(160.81)		(161.29)		(136.50)
Woman		45.76		56.67		86.02
		(96.85)		(100.99)		(81.79)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	442	442	442	442	442	442
R^2	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.08	0.02	0.04
Mean dependent (control)	297.3	297.3	280.0	280.0	268.7	268.7

The dependent variables are the respondent's balances on the BCSA account 15, 19 and 23 weeks after the last interview. In the even columns, we include the same baseline characteristics as in Table 4. All columns include village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

3.3 Heterogeneity

We test for heterogeneity in the treatment effects for five observable characteristics that we specified in our pre-analysis plan. Equation 1 becomes:

$$Y_{ij} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 T_{ij} + \gamma_2 H_{ij} + \gamma_3 T_{ij} \times H_{ij} + \gamma_4 X_{ij} + V_j + \nu_{ij} \tag{2}$$

We run five separate regressions in which H_{ij} is a dummy variable taking value one if the respondent (i) was offered (and therefore opened) an account, (ii) is a women, (iii) is impatient, (iv) takes savings decisions in the household, and (v) trusts both the BCSA and banks.

The main results are presented in the different panels in the Tables 6 and 7. The specifications are similar to those presented in Table 4: we test the impact on the three measures of savings, both without and with controls. The only difference is the inclusion of an interaction term between the treatment and the dummy of

interest. Within each panel, we first present the coefficient and standard error of being treated, the dummy of interest and their interaction. Next, we show the R^2.

Table 6: Heterogenous Effects: Had to Open an Account, and Gender

	Final Balance		Average Balance		Positive Balance	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Treatment effect for the respondents who opened an account						
Paid on account (PA)	447.65***	420.78***	303.82***	290.50***	0.19***	0.18***
	(96.90)	(128.29)	(38.46)	(55.52)	(0.04)	(0.03)
New account	-171.24	-211.35	-188.29	-177.41	-0.31***	-0.31***
	(184.78)	(205.96)	(166.35)	(159.84)	(0.06)	(0.06)
PA x new account	-26.92	-3.52	-73.43	-80.39	0.21***	0.22***
	(135.90)	(169.47)	(60.63)	(77.18)	(0.05)	(0.05)
R^2	0.07	0.10	0.05	0.09	0.29	0.34
Panel B: Treatment effect by gender						
Paid on account (PA)	376.17***	356.82***	220.90***	213.52***	0.29***	0.30***
	(66.76)	(96.27)	(48.98)	(54.36)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Woman	13.26	6.57	-65.55	-43.56	0.06	0.07
	(88.10)	(117.38)	(86.73)	(91.53)	(0.05)	(0.05)
PA x woman	118.65	125.33	98.50	79.69	-0.01	-0.03
	(98.14)	(119.73)	(85.62)	(91.45)	(0.05)	(0.06)
R^2	0.06	0.10	0.03	0.09	0.19	0.32
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	442	442	442	442	442	442
Mean dependent (control)	378.0	378.0	299.2	299.2	0.60	0.60

Each panel presents the main results of testing for heterogeneity in the treatment effects of a different baseline characteristic. The dependent variables and the baseline characteristics that are included in the even columns are the same as in Table 4. All columns include village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

The treatment effect is positive and significant in all the specifications. The interaction terms are never significant for all three measures of the account balance, suggesting that there are no robust heterogeneous treatment effects. For gender and having opened an account - the two characteristics on which we stratified our sample - Table 6 suggests that the treatment has similar effects on men and women, and on

Table 7: Heterogenous Effects: Being Impatient, Takes Savings Decisions and Trusts the BCSA and Banks

	Final Balance		Average Balance		Positive Balance	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel C: Treatment effect by impatience						
Paid on account (PA)	394.50***	394.19***	266.48***	256.54***	0.29***	0.29***
	(95.12)	(113.10)	(45.38)	(59.29)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Impatient	18.18	50.88	-10.31	15.54	-0.02	-0.02
	(50.42)	(64.42)	(36.81)	(54.59)	(0.05)	(0.04)
PA x impatient	91.30	59.52	8.70	-8.10	0.01	-0.01
	(100.14)	(122.08)	(51.44)	(69.45)	(0.06)	(0.05)
R^2	0.06	0.10	0.03	0.08	0.18	0.32
Panel D: Treatment effect for respondents who take savings decisions at home						
Paid on account (PA)	528.09***	480.50**	368.83**	317.55**	0.28***	0.24***
	(179.90)	(196.43)	(147.59)	(156.90)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Decides savings	156.87	181.10	174.79	176.51	-0.08	-0.06
	(183.89)	(184.56)	(194.17)	(188.61)	(0.07)	(0.06)
PA x decides savings	-112.15	-72.07	-119.65	-75.65	0.02	0.05
	(220.98)	(250.84)	(178.15)	(197.63)	(0.08)	(0.08)
R^2	0.06	0.10	0.03	0.08	0.19	0.32
Panel E: Treatment effect for respondents who trust both the BCSA and banks						
Paid on account (PA)	377.87**	366.64**	207.11**	218.01**	0.41***	0.40***
	(153.97)	(149.18)	(102.13)	(87.96)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Trusts bank & BCSA	3.01	14.30	57.04	64.62	0.14*	0.12*
	(86.14)	(100.97)	(43.73)	(56.06)	(0.08)	(0.07)
PA x Trusts bank & BCSA	76.71	71.89	82.06	48.11	-0.16*	-0.16**
	(145.73)	(123.84)	(121.80)	(91.85)	(0.09)	(0.08)
R^2	0.06	0.10	0.03	0.08	0.20	0.33
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	442	442	442	442	442	442
Mean dependent (control)	378.0	378.0	299.2	299.2	0.60	0.60

See Table 6 notes.

old and new account holders. However, we could not stratify on the characteristics which are shown in Table 7: being impatient, taking savings decisions, and having trust in banks and the BCSA.

4 Consumption and Total Savings

Being paid on the account increases the final balance by 111 percent, or Rs 420 (Table 4). In this Section, we explore whether the treatment changes the usage of the respondent's other savings tools or affects his/her total savings and consumption. To do so, we use the information that was gathered during the weekly household surveys. The average respondent was interviewed 10 times (Table 2), but twelve respondents never showed up. Therefore, the sample reduces from 442 to 430 observations.[12]

In Section 4.1 we show that - in terms of consumption patterns - there is a difference with respect to frequent consumption: respondents paid in cash spend about Rs 402 more. In Section 4.2, we find that the other savings are not affected. Therefore, we conclude that the treatment had a positive effect on total savings: respondents paid on the account saved more, while respondents paid in cash consumed it.

4.1 Impact on Consumption

We estimate the treatment effect on four different consumption categories: (i) frequent consumption, (ii) temptation goods, (iii) non-frequent expenditures and (iv) investment.[13] Each outcome variable is measured as the total amount spent over all the goods in each category. Table 8 provides the results that include covariates. The

[12]The first two columns of Table 15 in Appendix C show that the reduced sample remains balanced.

[13]Frequent consumption includes grains, cereals, pulses, lentils, milk products, edible oil, eggs, fish, meat, vegetables, sugar, salt, spices, fuels, light, soap, toothpaste, and shaving articles. Temptation goods include pan, alcohol, tobacco, drinks and snacks from the market, hair oil, lotion and perfume. Non-frequent consumption includes education expenses, personal expenses, services, rent, water charges, house repair, cloths, footwear, bedding, kitchen utensils, furniture, and other durable goods. The final category includes investments on livestock, businesses, and agricultural tools and inputs, such as fertilizers, machinery, and veterinary services.

Table 8: Treatment Effect on Consumption

	Frequent consumption (1)	Temptation goods (2)	Non-frequent expenditures (3)	Investments (4)
Paid on account	-401.91*	25.19	-327.09	455.20
	(226.75)	(49.51)	(932.51)	(933.07)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	430	430	430	430
R^2	0.16	0.11	0.11	0.11
Mean dependent (control)	3456	663	5220	2817

The dependent variables are the household's total expenditures on different consumption categories. We include the same baseline characteristics as in Table 4, and village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

results without covariates are similar, and available upon request. The treatment has a significant effect on frequent consumption only: the respondents paid in cash spend Rs 402 more. Remarkably, the size of the treatment effect is almost the same as the impact on the respondent's final balance in Table 4.

4.2 Impact on Total Savings

Table 9 shows the treatment effect on the financial assets that respondents might own: (i) cash at home, (ii) money on other accounts, (iii) balance with an agricultural cooperative, (iv) balance on a post office account, (v) savings with self-help groups (SHGs) or other informal neighborhood groups, and (vi) the sum of those five assets and the savings on the BCSA account. For each asset, we use the value that was reported during the last interview. We provide the results that include covariates, but the estimates without covariates are similar, and available upon request.

We do not find any evidence that the respondents paid in cash save more in any of the other financial assets. They keep slightly more cash at home, but the coefficient is not significantly different from zero. As a result, the treatment effect on total savings - measured as the sum over the five assets and the balance on the

Table 9: Treatment Effect on Total Savings

	Cash at home (1)	Balance on other accounts (2)	Balance with cooperative (3)	Balance with post office (4)	Savings with SHGs (5)	Total (includes BCSA) (6)
Panel A: Full Sample						
Paid on account	-46.0	39.2	335.1*	7.40	256.7	957.2**
	(410.4)	(60.0)	(183.6)	(17.2)	(177.6)	(435.1)
Observations	430	430	430	430	430	430
R^2	0.13	0.07	0.14	0.07	0.20	0.12
Mean dependent (control)	1505	171	193	42	416	2700
Panel B: Without top values						
Paid on account	-57.5	46.2	137.2	8.51	261.1	763.8*
	(405.2)	(60.6)	(96.7)	(17.1)	(178.8)	(410.1)
Observations	426	426	426	426	426	426
R^2	0.13	0.06	0.22	0.08	0.20	0.12
Mean dependent (control)	1516	168	167	42	420	2685
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The dependent variables are the respondent's financial assets, measured during the last weekly interview. We include the same baseline characteristics as in Table 4, and village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

BCSA account - is significant and positive.

The treatment seems to have a positive effect on the balance with agricultural cooperatives. This is due to a small number of respondents who sold crops before the last interview. In Panel B, we show the results after excluding the top two values of balances with agricultural cooperatives for both the treated and control. The treatment effect on balances with agricultural cooperatives is no longer significant, and the other results do not change substantially.

5 The 'Default' or Other Mechanisms at Work?

We interpret the increased savings as the result of the default option, i.e. as the outcome of a differential payment strategy. Treated respondents procrastinate on withdrawing, and control respondents on depositing. This leads to an endurance of

the default option, and therefore a difference in account balance. In Section 5.1, we use data on transactions to underline the procrastination mechanism. Next, we test and formally reject two alternative mechanisms that could have brought about the result. In Section 5.2, we show that respondents who were paid on the account do not trust or empathy the BCSA more than respondents who were paid in cash. In Section 5.3, we provide evidence against the treated respondents having developed an active savings habit on the BCSA account.

5.1 Transactions

Table 10 provides summary statistics on the total number of deposits and withdrawals made by the respondents (so after we subtracted our deposits on the accounts of the treated). Although the respondents are paid 10 times on average (see Table 2), the villagers paid on the account withdraw 2.6 times only, and the villagers paid in cash deposited 2.8 times only. These results are consistent with the procrastination mechanism that we underline: we observe a difference in the account balance because respondents paid in cash do few deposits (and almost no withdrawals), and respondents paid on the account do few withdrawals (and almost no deposits).

The similarity between the number of deposits made by the control, and the number of withdrawals done by the treated is remarkable. In Table 11 we test whether there is a difference in the total number of transactions, i.e. in the total number of withdrawals and deposits. There is no significant treatment effect.

5.2 Trust in the BCSA

In the previous section, we showed that the average number of transactions is similar for treated and control villagers. However, the share of people who did at least one transaction is 50% higher in the treatment group. Therefore, the treated are more likely to be in contact with the BCSA, which might affect their trust in or empathy

Table 10: Transactions

	Full sample (Std. dev.)	Paid cash (Std. dev.)	Paid on account (Std. dev.)
Panel A: Total number of deposits			
	1.69	2.60	0.78
	(3.14)	(3.95)	(1.57)
Panel B: Total number of withdrawals			
	1.59	0.37	2.80
	(2.68)	(0.99)	(3.22)
Observations	442	221	221

Table 11: Treatment Effect on the Number of Transactions

	Number of transactions (1)	(2)
Paid on account	0.62	0.53
	(0.64)	(0.61)
New account		0.45
		(0.35)
Woman		0.26
		(0.44)
Controls	No	Yes
Observations	442	442
R^2	0.01	0.08
Mean dependent (control)	2.97	2.97

The dependent variable is the respondent's total number of transactions. In column 2, we include the same baseline characteristics as in Table 4. All columns include village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

towards the banker, and their willingness to keep a higher balance on the account. To test whether this is the case, we played trust and dictator games shortly after the last weekly interview.

Not all the respondents were available during the games. Therefore, we test the balance across treated and control in the last two columns of Table 15 in Appendix C. All of the 22 coefficient estimates are small and none of them is significantly different from zero. This suggests that the treatment is still orthogonal to observed baseline characteristics in the reduced sample.

First, the respondents were asked to play a trust game in the role of the trustor, while the BCSA was the trustee. They had to allocate a fixed endowment X of Rs 50 between themselves and the BCSA using multiples of 10. The BCSA received triple the amount sent, $3X$, and could send back any amount Y between 0 and $3X$, using multiples of 10 (0; 10; 20;...; $3X$). The respondent earned (50 - X + Y) and the BCSA ($3X$ - Y). The BCSA did not know who gave the money, he only knew it came from a person in his village.

Next, each respondent was asked to play a triple dictator game in the role of the dictator. The respondent had to allocate a fixed endowment of Rs 50 between himself and the BCSA, using multiples of 10. The villager earned (50 - X) and the BCSA $3X$. Again, the BCSA did not know who gave the money, he only knew it came from a person in his village.[14]

We estimate Equation 1, where Y_{ij} is the amount sent to the BCSA by respondent i in village j in the trust and the triple dictator game, respectively. The first two columns of Table 12 present the results for the trust game, and the last two columns for the triple dictator game.

Being paid on the account has no significant effect on the amount sent to the BCSA. The difference is also negligible in monetary value. Therefore, the lab ex-

[14]We used the strategy method to obtain the amounts sent back by the BCSA as a function of the amounts that he received.

Table 12: Treatment Effect on Trust and Empathy

	Trust game		Dictator game	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Paid on account	-1.71	-1.60	0.49	0.57
	(1.11)	(1.20)	(0.89)	(0.95)
New account		0.44		-1.01
		(1.41)		(1.10)
Woman		-3.84**		-3.49**
		(1.65)		(1.52)
Controls	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	381	381	381	381
R^2	0.00	0.06	0.00	0.06
Mean dependent (control)	21.5	21.5	10.1	10.1

In the columns 1-2 the dependent variable is the amount sent to the BCSA in a trust game, and in the columns 3-4 the amount sent in a triple dictator game. In the columns 2 and 4, we include the same baseline characteristics as in Table 4. All columns include village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

periment does not provide any evidence that the treatment had an impact on the trust in, or empathy towards the local banker.

5.3 Learning Effects

Individuals who are paid on their account on a regular basis might develop the habit to save on that account and deposit money themselves. If this is the case, changing from account to cash payments should not hinder a further increase of the balance. We test this formally in the field. At the end of *phase 1*, i.e. at the end of the weekly interviews in which the treated respondents were paid on the account, and the control group in cash, we took a break. After the break, we did interviews for another four weeks, but we paid all the respondents in cash (= *phase 2*). We explicitly told them that the use of the accounts did not change, but that they have to deposit themselves the share of their income they want on the account. This second phase was not announced and could not have been anticipated by the respondents.

First, we estimate the treatment effect on the evolution of the balances during phase 2. The left hand side variable is the difference in the respondent's balance on the BCSA account between the day after we finished, and the day before we started phase 2. The results are given in Table 13.

Table 13: Treatment Effect on the Change in Balance during Phase 2

	Change in balance during phase 2	
	(1)	(2)
Paid on account during phase 1	6.63	17.02
	(59.45)	(66.86)
New account		71.66
		(67.31)
Woman		87.89*
		(47.61)
Controls	No	Yes
Observations	442	442
R^2	0.00	0.08
Mean dependent (control)	21.3	21.3

The dependent variable is the difference in the respondent's balance on the BCSA account between the start and the end of phase 2. During phase 2 of the experiment, all the respondents were paid in cash. Column 2 includes the same baseline characteristics as in Table 4. All columns include village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

Being paid on the account during phase 1 has no significant effect on the change in the account's balance during phase 2 of the logbooks. Furthermore, the difference is small.

Second, we graphically present the evolution of the balances in Figure 4. At the end of phase 1, the control group's account balance decreases slightly before it becomes stable. The balance of the treated respondents decreases more, before it becomes stable as well around week 19. The account balance of the treated remains twice as high as the balance of the control individuals, but - even though the respondents receive the exact same income during phase 2 as during phase 1 - we no longer observe a differential increase in the savings of the treated. The observed difference was created during the weeks in which the treated were paid on the account.

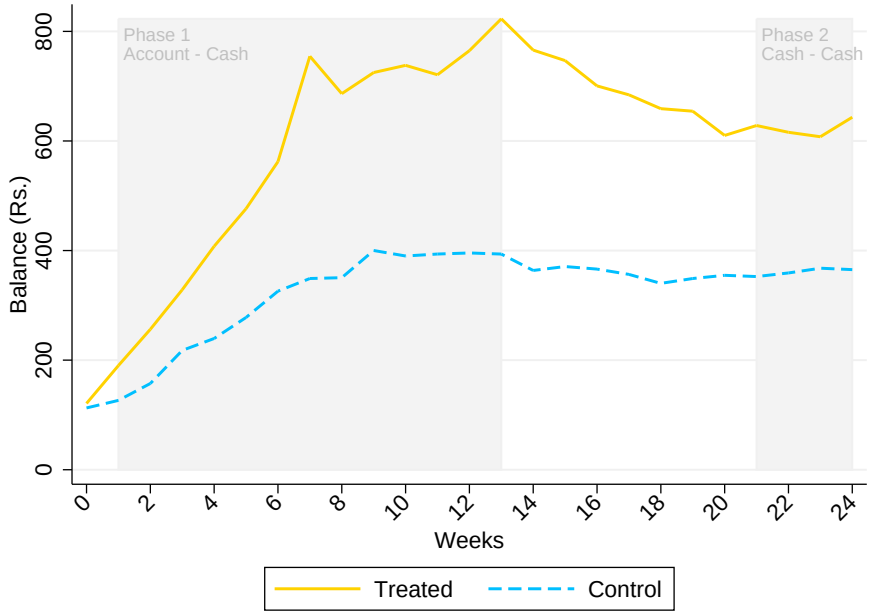

Figure 4: Balance during Phase 1, the break and Phase 2

Next, we formally estimate the significance of the changes in the balance over time using the following respondent fixed effects regression:

$$Y_{ijt} = \delta_0 + \delta_1 D_t + \delta_3 T_{ij} \times D_t + W_i + \mu_{ijt} \tag{3}$$

where Y_{ijt} is the balance on the account of respondent i in village j at time t, D_t are time dummies, and $T_{ij} \times D_t$ are the interactions of being treated during phase 1 and each of the time dummies. The coefficient of T_{ij} is not estimated, as we include individual fixed effects W_i. We create a panel consisting of eight observations per household, that allows us to capture the most important moments of the experiment. The first observation is the day before the first interview took place in the village, i.e. the day before we started the treatment. The second observation is the day after the end of phase 1 in the village. The other 6 observations in the panel are approximately biweekly: week 2, 4, and 6 during the break (= week 15, 17 and 19 in Figure 4); the day before we started phase 2 (= just before week 21 in Figure 4);

and week 2 and 4 of phase 2 (= week 22 and 24 in Figure 4).

The results are presented in Table 14. The first column provides the regression results, and the second column the difference between the impact at time t and at time $t-1$ of the panel. The omitted category is the day before the start of phase 1 in the village. The evolution of the balance in the control group is estimated in the first part of the table, and in the treated group in the second part, i.e. where the time dummies are interacted with the dummy indicating that the person was paid on the account. The balance of the control group is stable over time: it decreases insignificantly after phase 1, and increases slightly in the first weeks of phase 2. This is consistent with a pattern of consumption smoothing over time. The treated respondents significantly decrease their balance immediately after phase 1, but not in the weeks before, and during phase 2. In the first weeks of phase 2, the balance even goes down a bit more, though it is not significant.

The results reject the hypothesis that the treated respondents developed a savings habit on their account and therefore reached a higher balance. The balance of the treated as compared to the control increased significantly only, in those weeks where the treated villagers were paid directly on the account.

Finally, we estimate the treatment effect on the number of transactions, consumption, and usage of other savings tools during Phase 2. The results are displayed in the Tables 16, 17 and 18 respectively (Appendix D).[15] As we do not observe a difference in savings on the BCSA account during Phase 2, we do not expect a treatment effect on the other outcome variables. Indeed, once everyone is paid in cash, the treated and control no longer differ in terms of consumption patterns (the difference on frequent consumption is less than 1 rupee), they still do the same number of transactions (0.81 on average), and use financial assets in a similar way.

[15]For consumption and savings, the sample reduces to 401 observations, but it remains balanced. The results are available upon request.

Table 14: Balance Evolution over Time

	Balance	Difference
	(1)	(2)
Day after last interview of phase 1	268.82***	
	(42.24)	
Two weeks after last interview of phase 1	246.87***	-21.95
	(50.71)	(27.78)
Four weeks after last interview of phase 1	233.05***	-13.82
	(49.96)	(12.35)
Six weeks after last interview of phase 1	225.86***	-7.19
	(50.37)	(11.30)
Day before the start of phase 2 in the village	221.50***	-4.36
	(51.83)	(13.46)
Day after second interview of phase 2	235.59***	14.09*
	(53.77)	(7.19)
Day after fourth (and last) interview of phase 2	242.80***	7.21
	(54.98)	(25.03)
Paid on account		
x Day after last interview of phase 1	420.45***	
	(57.68)	
x Two weeks after last interview of phase 1	367.21***	-53.24*
	(64.21)	(32.23)
x Four weeks after last interview of phase 1	319.50***	-47.71**
	(63.35)	(19.39)
x Six weeks after last interview of phase 1	297.21***	-22.29
	(63.51)	(15.55)
x Day before the start of phase 2 in the village	262.75***	-34.46
	(67.13)	(29.49)
x Day after second interview of phase 2	249.50***	-13.25
	(68.96)	(14.19)
x Day after fourth (and last) interview of phase 2	269.39***	19.89
	(76.94)	(52.82)
Observations	3536	
R^2	0.16	

In column 1 the dependent variable is the respondent's balance. It includes individual fixed effects. Column 2 provides the difference between the impact on the balance at time t and time $t-1$ in the panel. During phase 1, the treated villagers were paid on the account, and the control villagers in cash. During phase 2, all villagers were paid in cash. Standard errors are in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

6 Conclusions

Several products have been designed to encourage households to save more, from simple technologies such as a box with a key (Dupas and Robinson, 2013b), to savings reminders (Karlan et al., 2010), and commitment savings accounts (Ashraf et al., 2006; Ashraf et al., 2010). Although the overall impact is positive, these technologies have a limitation: they still require an active decision to save, and therefore some self-control. In developed countries, products have been designed that overcome the need of an active savings decision. The best known example are automatic transfers to 401(k) savings plans. In developing economies, where most economic transactions are settled in cash, direct transfers on a bank account could serve the same purpose. We tested this hypothesis in rural India. We compared the savings on bank accounts, the savings in other financial assets, and consumption patterns of villagers who received identical weekly payments, but were randomly allocated to being paid in cash (control) or on the bank account (treated). We find that being paid on the account increases savings by about 110 percent, or Rs 420 after three months. Being paid in cash increased the total expenditures on frequent consumption, such as rice, vegetables, and other regular household expenses, by a similar amount over the same period: Rs 402. The control group does not save more in other financial assets, such as cash at home.

We interpret our findings as the result of the default option, and underline the procrastination mechanism. Based on transactions data, we show that respondents paid in cash procrastinate on deposits, and respondents paid on the account on withdrawals. We explicitly ruled out two other mechanisms, namely the formation of a savings habit and treatment impacts on the relationship between the bankers and their clients.

Our sample includes both villagers who had already opened an account, and villagers who did so with our help. The combination is important to deal with

initial self-selection, and to have a sample that is representative of what a large scale financial inclusion plan - with accounts opened for everyone - would achieve.

The marginal savings rate is relatively high in our experiment. People received Rs 1500 on average, out of which the treated saved almost one third more than the control. An important outstanding research question is how savings and consumption would be affected if the main income source is paid on an account instead of in cash.

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Appendix A: Study Area

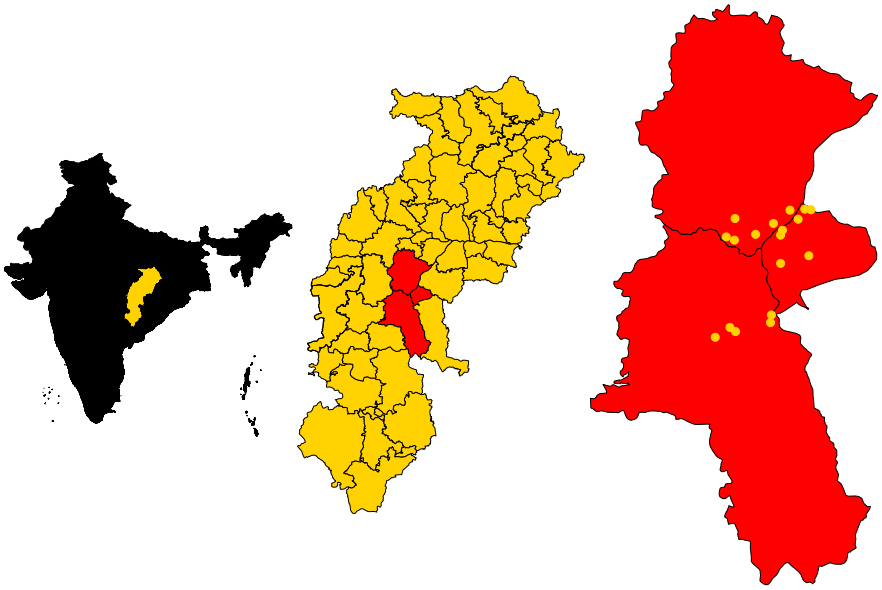

Figure 5: Map of the Study Area

Appendix B: Pre-specified and exploratory analysis

We registered a pre-analysis plan with the American Economic Association. It has the identification number AEARCTR-0000387 and can be consulted on www.socialscienceregistry.org. We follow the pre-planned analysis in the first four tables, and in the Tables 6, 7 and 13. The other tables provide some additional analysis that we decided upon after the pre-analysis plan was registered, but that we believe the paper benefits from.

We make three other important deviations from the initial pre-plan. First, we pre-specified that the standard errors in the Tables 4, 6, 7 and 13 would be clustered at the village level. Given the low number of clusters (17), there is the risk to artificially reduce the standard errors. This might indeed be the case, as the standard errors are smaller when they are clustered. We therefore decided to present bootstrapped standard errors. The level of significance of the impact is not affected by this deviation from the initial plan. The results are available upon request.

Second, the pre-analysis plan includes a fourth outcome variable, namely the maximum balance that was recorded on the account. This outcome variable did not add much to the analysis, and we therefore did not include it in the paper. The results are available upon request.

Third, the pre-analysis plan includes the description of a third group of villagers: those who do not have an account, and were not asked to open one. We do not include the analysis of that group, and the related outcome variables (Y2, Y3 and Y4) in this paper. We are writing a separate paper that specifically looks at Y2, Y3 and Y4 in the three groups of villagers that we sampled: (i) people without an account, (ii) people with a new account, (iii) people who already had an account.

Appendix C: Balance Check of Restricted Samples

Table 15: Summary Statistics and Balance Check for Restricted Samples

	Weekly interviews (Section 4)		**Lab (Section 5.2)**	
	Mean (Std. dev.)	Coefficient on *Paid on account* (Std. errors)	Mean (Std. dev.)	Coefficient on *Paid on account* (Std. errors)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Paid on account (%)	49.53		47.24	
	(50.06)		(49.99)	
New account (%)	46.98	-0.00	45.67	-0.02
	(49.97)	(0.05)	(49.88)	(0.05)
Woman (%)	50.23	0.00	51.44	0.00
	(50.06)	(0.05)	(50.04)	(0.05)
Caste category: ST (%)	12.55	0.01	13.12	0.01
	(33.18)	(0.03)	(33.81)	(0.03)
Caste category: SC (%)	12.33	-0.01	11.81	-0.01
	(32.91)	(0.03)	(32.32)	(0.03)
Caste category: OBC (%)	74.42	-0.00	74.28	-0.01
	(43.68)	(0.04)	(43.77)	(0.04)
Caste category: FC (%)	0.70	0.00	0.79	0.01
	(8.33)	(0.01)	(8.85)	(0.01)
Married (%)	88.14	0.01	87.40	-0.00
	(32.37)	(0.03)	(33.23)	(0.03)
Literate (%)	47.44	-0.01	46.98	0.00
	(49.99)	(0.05)	(49.97)	(0.05)
Land (acres)	1.18	-0.05	1.19	-0.03
	(1.76)	(0.17)	(1.81)	(0.19)
Age	43.22	0.51	43.57	0.07
	(12.60)	(1.22)	(12.69)	(1.30)
Wage labor in agriculture (%)	29.77	0.01	29.40	0.01
	(45.78)	(0.04)	(45.62)	(0.05)
Wage labor outside agriculture (%)	13.26	0.02	14.17	0.04
	(33.95)	(0.03)	(34.92)	(0.04)
Self-employed in agriculture (%)	45.81	-0.01	44.36	-0.04
	(49.88)	(0.05)	(49.75)	(0.05)
Self-employed outside agriculture (%)	3.95	-0.00	4.20	-0.01
	(19.51)	(0.02)	(20.08)	(0.02)
Dwelling type: katcha (%)	52.56	0.00	52.49	0.01
	(49.99)	(0.05)	(50.00)	(0.05)
Accounts held (#)	1.17	0.01	1.18	0.01
	(0.59)	(0.06)	(0.59)	(0.06)
Savings groups (#)	0.16	-0.02	0.17	-0.01
	(0.38)	(0.04)	(0.39)	(0.04)
Impatient (%)	41.86	0.05	43.31	0.03
	(49.39)	(0.05)	(49.62)	(0.05)
Takes savings decision at home (%)	84.65	0.03	84.25	0.02
	(36.09)	(0.03)	(36.47)	(0.04)
Trusts the BCSA and banks (%)	73.26	0.02	72.70	0.01
	(44.31)	(0.04)	(44.61)	(0.05)
Distance to the BCSA (km)	0.28	-0.02	0.28	-0.02
	(0.21)	(0.02)	(0.20)	(0.02)
Balance on BCSA account before start weekly surveys (Rs)	121.25	13.83	125.84	12.34
	(727.25)	(70.72)	(762.18)	(78.50)
Weeks interviewed (#)	10.00	-0.28	10.18	-0.33
	(2.65)	(0.26)	(2.52)	(0.26)
Observations	430	430	381	381

The first and third columns report means (and standard deviations), and the second and fourth columns show the coefficient estimates (and standard errors) of the difference between the means in the treatment and control groups. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent

Appendix D: Transactions, Consumption and Total Savings during Phase 2

Table 16: Treatment Effect on the Number of Transactions during Phase 2

	Number of transactions	
	(1)	(2)
Paid on account	0.00	-0.01
	(0.09)	(0.10)
Controls	No	Yes
Observations	442	442
R^2	0.00	0.05
Mean_control	0.81	0.81

The dependent variable is the respondent's total number of transactions during phase 2. In column 2, we include the same baseline characteristics as in Table 4. All columns include village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

Table 17: Treatment Effect on Consumption during Phase 2

	Frequent consumption (1)	Temptation goods (2)	Non-frequent expenditures (3)	Investments (4)
Paid on account	0.57	-13.31	174.44	162.01
	(65.98)	(12.09)	(313.46)	(387.21)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	401	401	401	401
R^2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
Mean dependent (control)	1009	213.2	1134.4	1983.1

The dependent variables are the household's total expenditures on different consumption categories during phase 2. We include the same baseline characteristics as in Table 4, and village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.

Table 18: Treatment Effect on Total Savings during Phase 2

	Cash at home (1)	Balance on other accounts (2)	Balance with cooperative (3)	Balance with post office (4)	Savings with SHGs (5)	Total (includes BCSA) (6)
Paid on account	-156.5	291.1	305.0	43.1	187.9	928.0
	(243.0)	(413.1)	(258.1)	(31.3)	(179.4)	(569.9)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	401	401	401	401	401	401
R^2	0.16	0.04	0.15	0.04	0.18	0.12
Mean dependent (control)	1426	197	365	31	531	2902

The dependent variables are the respondent's financial assets, measured during the last weekly interview of phase 2. We include the same baseline characteristics as in Table 4, and village fixed effects. Bootstrapped standard errors are given in parenthesis. *** significant at 1 percent, ** significant at 5 percent, * significant at 10 percent.